Visit to the Gallery

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An innocent visit to an art gallery goes horribly wrong. Can the Strawhats escape or will they be trapped forever?

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Red Rose and Green Rose

Here we go, everyone! I don't want to raise your expectations, so I'll tell you now that this is basically Strawhats-Get-Trapped-in-Dark-Gallery.

More info after this chapter

"Well, this looks interesting," Robin commented, scanning an article in the newspaper. She and Nami were sunning on the deck.

Nami looked up. "Yeah? What is it?"

Robin glanced at her. "Isn't our next stop called Fiore Island?"

"Yeah," Nami said.

"Well, there's an art gallery being hosted there today and tomorrow," Robin said, showing her the article. "For an artist named Weiss Guertena."

"Guertena- *san* ?"

The girls looked up to see Brook approaching. "What about Guertena- *san* ?" Brook asked.

"You've heard of him?" Robin asked curiously.

Brook chuckled. "He died five years before I did! He's from the West Blue and he was quite popular in his time. So young, though . . . I never got the chance to see any of his works, other than the photos from the paper."

"Really," Robin said in surprise. "There's a gallery being held for his works on our next island."

Nami handed the skeleton the paper. He took it with a bony hand and scanned the article. "Amazing," he said, admiring the photo of the sculpture *Abyss of the Deep* . "I haven't seen these in over fifty years! And they say that they're displaying more than twenty of his works? That's quite impressive, considering that most of them have been lost over the years."

"Oh?" Nami said. "What happened to them?"

Brook shrugged. "Destroyed, stolen, and who knows what else? I hear that one of them was taken home by a fellow student when Guertena- *san* was still studying."

"Interesting," Robin murmured. "Why don't we all go?"

"All of us?" Nami asked in surprise.

Robin shrugged. "It couldn't hurt, and it might be fun to have a relaxing day for once. Besides, I think that some of our crew could stand to experience a little bit of culture."

When she said this, the slightest emphasis was put on 'some' and for half a second her eyes flicked over to where Luffy and Usopp were bothering Zoro.

"Yeah, I see what you mean," Nami said, who had not failed to catch these subtle actions. "Alright, I guess we'll bring it up at dinner."

"By the way, Nami- *san* , may I see your panties?"

A minute later, Brook meekly crawled away with a bump on his head.

"Art gallery?" Zoro muttered. "Not interested."

"Sure, let's go!" Luffy exclaimed. "What's an art gallery?"

Nami groaned. "Do you know what art is?"

Luffy frowned. "Sure I do. Painting and drawing and stuff."

"An art gallery is where they show a lot of paintings and sculptures in a building and you walk around and look at them. For this one, they're only showing art by an artist named Guertena."

"Oh, okay," Luffy said in understanding.

"It could be interesting," Robin added. "They might have some paintings you'll like. The only problem is that you're not allowed to be loud in the gallery."

Luffy frowned. "Well . . . I can *try* to be quiet . . ."

"That sounds like fun," Usopp agreed. "Did I ever tell you guys about the time that I saved a priceless masterpiece from villainous thieves?"

"Really!?" Chopper exclaimed.

Usopp was about to launch into his story when Franky said, "Count me in. I'd like to see some of those sculptures. I bet they're super."

"If Robin- *chwan* and Nami- *swan* want to go, then I want to go!" Sanji exclaimed.

"I wanna go too," Chopper said. "I've never been to an art gallery before!"

The crew turned to stare at Zoro.

"C'mon, Zoro," Usopp complained. "We're all going!"

Zoro rolled his eyes. "That doesn't mean *I* want to go!"

"Nope!" Luffy declared. "You're coming with us! Captain's orders!"

"Isn't that an abuse of power?" Zoro muttered. "Fine, I'll go."

Luffy grinned.

The following day they dropped anchor at Fiore Island. The crew headed towards the exhibition building, which was about as tall as three or four houses stacked on top of one another.

They entered and were stopped by a man behind a desk. "Excuse me," he said in a bored voice, "I'm afraid weapons aren't allowed in here."

He pointed to Zoro's swords. "Sir, if you could give those to me, I'll keep them here and you'll get them back when you leave."

Zoro scowled and handed over his swords, watching them carefully as the man stored them behind the desk. Brook handed the man his cane-sword, and Usopp sighed and handed over his slingshot. Nami reluctantly gave him the Clima Tact.

"That's all?" he said, glancing around at the group. When they nodded, he cleared his throat and said, "Welcome to the Guertena Exhibition. Here, we'll be displaying many works by the artist Weiss Guertena. We hope that you enjoy your time here."

The group headed off.

"Well, let's meet back here when we're done, shall we?" Robin said with a smile.

Luffy, Zoro, Sanji, Franky, and Brook headed to the upper level, while Nami, Chopper, Robin, and Usopp went off to the side.

"This is just weird," Franky said, staring with crossed arms at a sculpture. He and Brook were standing in front of a piece entitled *Wariness* , which resembled a large pink sphere stuck with several knives.

"Hey, skeleton, what do you think about this one?" Franky asked, glancing at Brook.

"I have no clue what it means," Brook said cheerfully. "But it's rather aesthetically pleasing, don't you think?"

Franky shrugged and looked back at it. ". . . Are those real knives?"

Robin and Chopper stood in front of a large sculpture of a red rose. Several of its petals were scattered around it and the area was roped off, a clear indicator of 'Do Not Touch'.

"' *Embodiment of Spirit* '," Chopper read aloud quietly. "'Beautiful at a glance, but if you get too close, it will induce pain. It can only bloom in wholesome bodies.' Robin, what does this sculpture mean?"

Robin smiled. "Art is open to interpretation, Chopper. What do *you* think it means?"

Chopper thought. ". . . Well . . . um . . . I'd like to hear your opinion first . . ."

Robin smiled again. "I think Guertena was trying to say that if a person's 'spirit' or 'soul' had a physical, tangible form, it would look like a rose; something that is beautiful but painful to touch."

"Oh," Chopper said in understanding. "That's really cool."

Sanji stood all by himself in front of a painting titled *The Hanged Man* . He considered taking out a cigarette to have a quick smoke, but he realized that smoking was probably banned in the gallery and resisted the impulse to take out a pack.

"Whoever hanged this guy, they must be real idiots," he muttered. "You don't hang someone by their foot."

"Ooh . . . I want *all* of these!" Nami exclaimed. She and Usopp were standing in front of a display case—one of four—as part of a piece with the title *Twinkling of Crystals and Stars* . Underneath the glass were many small stones and jewels that caught the light and sparkled pleasantly.

"I wonder if they're on sale?" Nami said aloud, staring greedily down at the small gems.

Usopp sighed. "Probably not, Nami. And don't you dare think of stealing any."

Nami puffed out her cheeks in irritation. "For your information, I wasn't even *thinking* about stealing them before you said that, so if I *do* end up stealing them, it's *your* fault."

"What!?"

"Hm . . ."

Luffy and Zoro stood in front of a very wide mural. The colors were dark and it seemed to have a few vaguely recognizable things within it, like a woman wearing red—but other than that, it was mainly splattered colors.

"What does this say?" Luffy asked, pointing to the title. "Something World?"

Zoro squinted at it. "Uh . . . Fab . . . Fabricated World. It means . . . well, made-up world. A world that isn't real, I guess."

Luffy nodded in understanding and stared at the mural, apparently in thought.

The lights flickered. Luffy and Zoro glanced up, but they stopped flickering after a moment.

Luffy frowned. "That's weird . . ."

Zoro nodded. "It feels different in here . . . should we go find the others?"

Luffy nodded.

"I think the cook was around here," Zoro continued, going forward and turning right. "Hey—"

He stopped. In front of him were two exhibits, *Reserved Seat* and *Death of the Individual* . However, there was no one standing around them.

"What's up?" Luffy asked curiously, coming around. "Hey, where'd everyone go?"

"I don't see the cook, either," Zoro muttered. "I could've sworn he was standing right up ahead . . ."

No one was in front of *The Hanged Man* .

"Brook and Franky came up here too," Luffy remembered. "Let's find them."

He and Zoro went around the corner and down the hall. There was no one examining the paintings lining the way. When they turned the corner, they saw neither strangers nor Brook nor Franky.

"This is weird," Zoro said with narrowed eyes. "This place was filled with people a moment ago."

Luffy frowned. "HEY!" he yelled. "ANYBODY THERE?"

No answer, no response of approaching footsteps.

The lights flickered again.

"Maybe downstairs," Zoro suggested.

They headed for the stairs. When they got down, they noticed that the man behind the desk was no longer there.

"Maybe they all went outside," Luffy said hopefully.

Zoro went for the doors and pulled hard. "They're locked," he said, turning back to Luffy. "We're stuck in here."

Luffy pulled back his fist. "Gum-Gum . . . *Pistol* !"

He punched hard, but all that happened was that he stumbled, almost losing his balance.

"What happened?" Zoro demanded, coming over. "Weren't you going to stretch?"

Luffy frowned. "I couldn't."

"What?"

"I couldn't stretch," Luffy said, looking up at Zoro as he stood.

Zoro grabbed both of Luffy's cheeks and pulled hard. Luffy yelled out in pain and Zoro stopped.

"You're not stretching," he said in surprise.

"I could have told you that," Luffy said, rubbing his face. "Even if I can't stretch, maybe we can punch through the door?"

They approached the door, pulled back their fists, and punched hard. Instead of breaking through, they stumbled backwards, clutching their fists in pain.

"What the hell!?" Zoro snapped. "Why . . ."

"I-I'm not strong anymore," Luffy said, staring at his hands. "Zoro, I think we got weaker."

Zoro scratched his head in frustration. "What in the ever-loving *fuck* is going on!?"

"We need to get out of here," Luffy said decisively. "I dunno where the others are, but if we keep looking we'll find them, right?"

Zoro nodded. "Yeah. Lead the way."

Luffy went forward towards the giant fish painting on the floor, the main feature of the exhibition. He jogged down the hallway and all the way around. When he came back he was panting from the effort.

"Wow . . ." he said, breathing hard. "Not being strong sucks . . ."

"Anything?" Zoro said hopefully.

Luffy shook his head. "There's no one there . . . I thought I heard someone cough, but there was no one."

Zoro glanced over at the fish painting and frowned. "The rope's gone."

He pointed to the rope that prevented people from stepping on the painting. A section of it was missing.

Luffy and Zoro went over to examine the place. Luffy immediately stuck out a hand and touched the painting, similar to how a child wants to touch everything for themselves. To his and Zoro's surprise, his hand went straight through the painting instead of stopping at the normal boundary of floor and air.

They looked at each other. Zoro stood and slowly lowered a foot towards the painting. It went straight through.

Without another word they grabbed each other's hands and jumped in.

For a moment they were floating in an ocean-like atmosphere—but then they were falling slowly down. They landed lightly on a set of

stairs.

They silently walked downwards. The walls were painted dark blue and the lights overhead flickered briefly. When they reached the bottom and turned around, the staircase had vanished.

"Where did the stairs go?" Luffy asked worriedly.

Zoro shrugged. "I can tell you as much about that as I know about where the fuck we are."

Luffy impulsively turned and went off to the right. Zoro rolled his eyes and followed him. As they walked down the long hallway, the only thing that really stood out was the word 'COME' written all over the walls in what seemed to be red paint.

"Hey . . ."

Luffy stopped in front of a small table standing in front of a door. Perched upon the table was a dark gray vase with two roses sticking out—one red and one green.

He grinned and pointed to the green rose. "It looks like you, Zoro!"

Zoro rolled his eyes again. Luffy attempted to move the table to get through the door, but it wouldn't budge.

"I think it's stuck," he said, staring at it. Zoro tried the same thing with the same result.

Luffy stared at the roses. Slowly he reached out a hand and took out the red one. It was beautiful and healthy-looking, as if it had been freshly cut.

Zoro carefully took the green one and studied it. It couldn't have been real—since when did green roses exist? Yet it looked just as healthy and beautiful as Luffy's red one.

Looking up, he noticed a small sign posted next to the door. "'You and the rose are intertwined'," he read aloud. "'Know the weight of your own life.'"

Luffy reached over to Zoro's rose and plucked a petal off. "Is this thing real? I've never heard of green—"

"Ow!"

Luffy and Zoro looked at each other in surprise. "What?" Luffy asked.

"I . . ." Zoro felt his arm. "My arm hurt . . . when you pulled the petal off."

He lifted up the sleeve of his T-shirt and found a small wound, barely bleeding.

"When did this . . . ?"

Luffy studied his red rose and yanked one of the petals off.

"Ouch!"

A small cut appeared on his face, similar to Zoro's.

Zoro stared at it. "So . . . that sign said that we're 'intertwined' with the roses. Is this what it meant . . . ?"

Luffy stared at his rose. "I guess we gotta take really good care of these."

Zoro leaned against the table and to his surprise it moved. He stood and shoved it aside, allowing access to the door beyond.

"Weird," he muttered, shrugging. He and Luffy went in to find a small room. The only things inside were a painting of a pretty woman with long hair that was—was it coming *out* of the frame?—dark blue-gray, a small sign beneath the painting, and a tiny light blue key on the ground.

Luffy knelt and picked up the key.

"Whoa!"

Luffy looked up and saw Zoro staring at the painting. He looked over at it and saw that the woman's mouth had opened in a wide grin, her tongue was sticking out, and her eyes looked to their left.

"Wow," Luffy said. "Mystery painting!"

"What the fuck *is* this place!?" Zoro yelled.

Luffy went up to the sign and squinted at it. "'When the rose' . . . something . . . 'you too will' . . . something . . ."

Zoro looked at it. "'When the rose wilts, you too will rot away."

They looked at their roses.

"Let's take *really really* good care of these," Luffy emphasized, putting the key in his pocket.

Zoro nodded. "Yeah . . . let's go for now, I guess. We're not gonna get outta here by standing around."

They left and headed down the hallway. The only difference they saw was that the word 'COME' all over the walls had been replaced with the word 'THIEF'.

About halfway down, red letters suddenly appeared one-by-one on the floor directly in front of them. Luffy and Zoro stopped and stared. They too spelled out 'THIEF'.

They glanced at each other and kept moving.

All the way at the other end of the hall was another door, as well as a small painting hanging next to it.

Luffy looked at it. "'The Something Fish'."

"Geo . . . Geometric," Zoro said, looking at the title.

Luffy looked at the painting. "That's a cool fish . . . I'm hungry now."

"You're always hungry," Zoro pointed out. He tried the door only to find that it was locked.

"Hey, you got a key in that other room, right?" he asked Luffy. Luffy nodded and held it out; Zoro took it and tried it in the handle. The door easily swung open and they entered, leaving the key in the lock.

Alright, here's a bit more info. First off, I will *not* be including any of the three main characters from Ib.

I will also not be including Crayon Town. This is because it's obviously Mary who made the place, and since Mary will not be in this story, out goes Crayon Town. However, I will be including the Orange and Aqua dungeons (the two 'bonus' dungeons in Ib ver. 1.04 or higher) as 'regular' dungeons in the storyline.

Orange Rose and Yellow Rose

Luffy and Zoro blinked in the sudden change of color: The walls, floor, and ceiling were painted green, unlike the blue-colored area they had just left. There was a hallway ahead and a passageway to the right.

Luffy stepped forward and read a sign straight ahead of them. "Beware the edges," he said slowly. "Zoro, what does that mean?"

Zoro scowled. "Why would I know?"

"Oh yeah," Luffy said solemnly. "Zoro's not very smart. I forgot."

"Look who's talking!"

Luffy stepped around the sign and began walking down the narrow hallway, only to jump aside quickly as something long and dark flew out of the wall.

Zoro and Luffy slowly approached it, keeping a good distance away. It seemed to be stuck in the wall, not quite reaching the center of the hallway. It also seemed to be a shadowy hand attempting to snatch at them.

"This place keeps getting weirder," Zoro said at last. Luffy started off down the hallway again, and jumped aside when another shadowy hand popped out of the other side.

Zoro went ahead of him and leaped aside as a shadowy hand flew out of the right wall. Unfortunately, he was then attacked by yet another hand coming out of the opposite wall.

"Ah!" he hissed, backing away from the hands. A petal fell off of his rose and he rubbed his arm where small scratches had appeared, glaring at the hand.

Luffy cautiously side-stepped between the two hands and turned the corner to the right. A hand leapt out of the wall ahead of him, but he paid it no mind. Ahead was a door, colored green like the rest of the room. He jiggled the knob—it was locked.

"Zoro," he said, turning to his friend, who had caught up, "the door's locked."

"Oh, fantastic," Zoro snapped. He rammed a foot into the door, trying to kick it down, only to remember that he had lost most of his strength. He sighed.

"There was another way down there," he remembered. "We should check that out."

They cautiously went back down the hallway and turned the corner. Paintings of insects lined the way. At the end was another green door—this one was unlocked.

Inside, the two found themselves facing a gap in the floor. Neither could see the bottom. They both leaped across, landing safely on the other side and going through the door on that side.

Through that door was a small hallway. At the end stood a red headless statue and a green key lying in front of it.

"Hey," Luffy said, turning to Zoro and pointing at the statue. "Wasn't that in the gallery?"

Zoro nodded. "Yeah . . . there were three of them standing around . . . I can't remember the title of the piece."

Luffy shrugged and knelt to pick up the key. As he straightened, the statue took a step towards him.

He and Zoro glanced at each other. The statue lunged.

They yelled in shock and ran for the door, fumbling with the knob. Before it could catch up to them, they had run in, leaped the gap,

and run back into the passage lined with insect paintings. Behind them they heard a loud *CRASH* as the statue fell into the gap in the floor.

"What was *that* ?" Zoro demanded.

"Mystery statue," Luffy said simply, clutching his rose and the key tightly.

"Statues shouldn't move!" Zoro snapped. "They shouldn't chase people down either!"

Luffy shrugged. "Mystery statue," he repeated.

Zoro made a frustrated noise. "That key probably opens the door up there. C'mon."

They warily made their way back to the locked door and used the key. The door swung open, permitting them entrance to a large yellow room.

The room was empty. On the wall directly ahead of them were two unnervingly large cat eyes, and in the middle of them there was a fish-shaped hole in the wall. To either side of them there were small passages leading to other rooms.

Luffy headed for the left one and Zoro followed. Inside on the back wall there was a painting of a meat cleaver chopping a fish in half. Neatly placed in two rows were eight large easels, seven of which were covered with curtains. The one closest to Luffy and Zoro had no curtain, but instead a small black stick figure with eerie red eyes.

As they studied the painting, writing suddenly appeared in the lower right-hand corner. Zoro squinted at it.

"Play hide-and-seek?" he read aloud.

The stickman vanished. Luffy jumped.

"Is this a game?" Zoro snapped. "We're trying to get out of this godforsaken place and we have to play *hide-and-seek* with a *goddamn stickman* ?"

Luffy laughed. "I like hide-and-seek! Let's play!"

He strode over to the next-nearest easel and yanked the curtains open, revealing a crescent moon. The lights dimmed.

"Did you do that?" Zoro demanded. Luffy shrugged. Zoro went over to an easel in the next row and pulled open the curtains. There was a scream and a slap, and the curtains flew back shut. A green petal floated to the ground.

"What happened?" Luffy asked curiously. Zoro rubbed his red cheek and scowled in response.

Luffy went to another easel and yanked open the curtains. He stumbled backwards suddenly and yelled, putting his hands over his eyes.

"What's wrong?" Zoro demanded, going over to Luffy and prying his hands off of his face. Luffy's eyes were covered with a large red handprint.

"Ugh," Luffy whimpered. "I can barely see!"

"Okay, stay there," Zoro instructed. "I'll find that jackass stickman and then we'll go get some water or something to scrub that thing off."

Luffy nodded and sat down, rubbing his eyes. Zoro went over to the easel at the end of the row and was surprised to find the stickman behind them when he yanked them open.

"A prize?" he said, reading the text that had appeared. There was a thumping sound, like something falling to the floor. He looked over and saw that the fish head from the painting was now on the floor.

He cautiously approached it and picked it up—it seemed to be made of wood.

"What the hell is this for?" he muttered. He went over to Luffy and helped him up. "C'mon, captain, let's go."

He led Luffy by hand out of the room and said, "Okay, if we can find some water—"

"Hey, I can see again!"

Zoro looked over at Luffy, who was blinking hard. The handprint had disappeared.

"I hate this place," Zoro snapped, throwing his arms up in the air in frustration. "Nothing makes *sense* !"

"Why do you have a fish head?" Luffy asked, staring at the sculpture hungrily.

"It's made out of wood," Zoro informed him. Luffy pouted.

Zoro glanced over at the fish-shaped hole nestled between the unnervingly large cat eyes. He walked over and placed the wooden fish head on the left.

"Maybe . . ." he said, looking at the passage to the right. "There's a fishtail over there?"

He and Luffy went into the right room. It looked like some kind of storage place—there were white mannequins, strangely large mannequin heads on the floor, and taped-up boxes stacked around the room. In one corner was a gray vase sitting on a table.

The lights flickered.

"Oh!" Luffy exclaimed, pointing to one of the overly large mannequin heads. "It moved!"

Zoro rolled his eyes. "Luffy, don't be stupid, mannequin heads don't —" he paused when he remembered the strange things that had happened to them. "Oh, crap."

The head that Luffy pointed to slowly moved on its own out of the row it was in. Its eyes were glowing red and it slowly moved towards them.

"So . . . that thing's bad," Luffy said.

"Yep."

"But it's moving really slowly."

"Yep."

"How is it moving with no legs?"

"I dunno."

Luffy and Zoro went around the row in order to avoid the head. Luffy spotted one of the boxes that had its flaps sticking up and went to investigate. He rummaged around and pulled out a hammer.

Zoro grinned as the head slowly switched direction. "You do the honors."

Luffy approached the head and swung the hammer down. The head shattered and bits of ceramic flew everywhere—one cut Luffy's arm and blood ran down to his wrist. A petal fell from his rose.

Zoro approached the shattered head and prodded it. It moved no more. Looking inside, he spotted the fishtail they were searching for.

"Hey," Luffy said quietly as another red petal fell to the floor. "The blood's not stopping."

Zoro stared at the wound. Seized with a sudden idea, he grabbed Luffy's rose (which was starting to look withered), hurried to the vase

in the corner, and stuck it inside just as another petal fell off.

Before their eyes, the petals that Luffy had lost bloomed back into place and the rose was looking perky and healthy once more. Luffy looked at his arm and saw that the wound had completely closed without a trace, leaving only dried blood.

"Wow," Zoro said with a low whistle. "That's pretty useful."

Luffy looked at Zoro's small wounds. "Your wounds aren't closing . . . maybe you can put your rose in the vase too?"

Zoro nodded and stuck his green rose inside. It too bloomed and his small wounds and scratches closed.

When he checked inside the vase, he saw that it was now empty—it seemed that the water they had used for their roses was all that it had to offer.

"We have the tail," Luffy said at last. Zoro nodded and the two left the room, avoiding the ceramic shards on the floor.

When they got back the middle room, Zoro inserted the wood fishtail into the slot, connecting it with the head. All of a sudden there was a very loud *MEOW* and the cat's eyes turned red as the wall in front of them vanished.

"Cool!" Luffy exclaimed cheerfully. "Let's go!"

He strode forward confidently as Zoro sighed in frustration. "I hate this place," he muttered yet again as he followed Luffy.

Luffy suddenly stopped before he reached the end of the passage, causing Zoro to bump into him. "Shh!" he whispered. "I hear someone!"

They listened carefully.

". . . I'm telling you, paintings shouldn't wiggle their tongues like that!"

"M-Maybe it was made with magic paint . . ."

"Magic paint!? Oh, *sure* , Usopp, *magic paint* . What kind of paint makes a painting *move* !?"

Luffy suddenly brightened and ran out of the passage, looking left. There were two screams and he said cheerfully, "Hey, guys!"

Zoro came out behind him and saw Usopp and Nami clutching each other, staring at Luffy in shock. They saw Zoro and started to relax.

"Ahh," Usopp sighed in relief, letting go of Nami, "you guys nearly gave me a heart attack!"

"Thank god you're here," Nami whimpered. "Something weird's going on!"

"We know," Zoro said, casting a glance at the painting they had been talking about. It was completely black except for two red eyes and a red mouth, where a tongue was sticking out and wiggling back and forth.

Luffy walked past the painting. It spit at him—the saliva landed on the floor and Usopp and Nami screamed.

"That painting—just spit at you," Nami cried.

Luffy glanced back at it. "Well . . . it's not trying to hurt us, so it's okay."

"Luffy, you're hurt," Usopp whimpered, pointing to the dried blood on his arm.

"Oh, this?" Luffy said unconcernedly. "The cut's already gone, don't worry!"

Zoro came over as well, stepping over the saliva with a disgusted look. The painting spit at him too, but missed again. Usopp and Nami screamed.

"Shush," he snapped. Spotting a gray vase sitting on a small table in the corner, he turned to the two and said, "Do you guys have roses?"

They looked at each other. "There were a couple roses in the room over there," Nami said, pointing to the door behind her.

"Go get them," Zoro snapped. "We'll explain then."

"So we're pretty much in the same situation," Usopp summed up, twirling a yellow rose between his fingers.

"And these roses . . . represent our life?" Nami said curiously, looking at her orange one.

"Yep," Zoro said, displaying his green rose.

"Do green roses even exist—?"

"I don't know," Zoro snapped.

"Now please tell me you guys were joking about losing your strength," Usopp whispered.

Zoro shrugged. "Sorry, I wouldn't joke about something like that. Speaking of which, Luffy lost his Devil Fruit powers."

Usopp and Nami reached over; they each grabbed one of Luffy's cheeks and pulled.

"Ow!" he whined. "That hurts!"

They let go. "Wow," Nami said. "That's so *weird* ."

"Anyway," Luffy said, standing, "we're trying to find a way out of here, and there's no way from where Zoro and me came from . . . but there's probably a way around here somewhere. Let's go!"

I have this headcanon that Zoro starts swearing a lot more when he's really frustrated.

LIAR

EDIT: Crap, I just realized that I updated this a day early. Oh well, I wasn't planning to post anything today anyway. Enjoy your early chapter.

The group, now four, made their way to a short hall. Nami spotted a piece of paper on the ground and picked it up curiously.

"It says 'Just when you've forgotten . . .'" she read aloud.

Zoro and Luffy glanced at each other. "Stick to the middle," Zoro ordered. "Don't get close to the walls."

"Why?" Usopp and Nami asked together.

Zoro walked down the hall, keeping his arms tucked in and walking in the center as much as possible. Near the end, a shadow hand leapt out of the wall and snatched at him. Usopp and Nami screamed. He made it to the other side without getting scratched and turned back to them, crossing his arms.

"Can you just trust me next time?" he muttered. "Get over here."

Luffy easily followed, moving out of the way of the shadow hand. Usopp went next, bending his body into a comically disproportionate curve to avoid the hand. Finally, Nami came down the hall, staying as far away from the shadow hand as possible.

Luffy grinned. "See, it's not that hard!"

They elected to go to the left, where a door awaited them. Above it was a plate with the words THE LIARS' ROOM. Upon opening it, they found six paintings of children's silhouettes, each wearing a differently-colored dress or shirt. A door was in the center of the wall ahead, separating the paintings into sides of three each.

Each painting had a title card beneath it. Ignoring these, Luffy strode into the room directly ahead. Usopp went after him to keep an eye on his impulsive captain. However, both came back into THE LIARS' ROOM rather quickly. Luffy was coughing and Usopp was patting him on the back.

"What happened?" Zoro snapped.

"There were a statue and a bunch of tiles on the ground," Usopp explained. "Luffy pulled one of the tiles up and some kind of green cloud or something came up. I think it was poison . . ." he glanced at their roses, red and yellow. "His rose lost a petal."

Zoro scowled, stepped forward, and peeked into the room. There was indeed a white statue in the center of the room, and every tile on the floor appeared to be loose. Spotting something, he cautiously stepped forward and examined the statue.

He came back into THE LIARS' ROOM and shut the door behind him. "There's something written on the statue," he explained. "It said 'There's an odd one out'."

Nami, meanwhile, had been examining the captions beneath the paintings. When Zoro said this, she looked up sharply, and then brightened.

"What's up?" Luffy asked—he had stopped coughing at last.

"I think I understand," Nami said. "First off, take a look at these captions."

The others bent to read them. As they did so, it was almost like they could hear each child's voice echoing in their heads.

" Stand in front of the statue," the one wearing green declared, *" go west three steps, then south one step. That's the answer!"*

" Stand in front of the statue," proclaimed the one wearing brown, *" go east four steps, then north two steps. That's the answer!"*

" The one in white speaks the truth!" cried the one wearing yellow.

" The only truth-speaker wears green!" the one wearing blue argued.

" Stand in front of the statue," exclaimed the one wearing white, *" go east two steps, then south two steps. That's the answer!"*

" I agree with the one in yellow!" the one wearing red said firmly.

The three men frowned.

"They're all saying different things," Usopp pointed out.

Nami nodded. "Remember the sign above the door? This is THE LIARS' ROOM."

Zoro and Luffy looked at Usopp.

"Not me!" he snapped.

"Wait, so they're all lying?" Zoro said, staring at the paintings. "What are they talking about, anyway?"

"Probably those tiles in that room," Nami said, pointing to the door. "If one of these paintings is correct, and we follow the directions, we can find something *other* than poison beneath the tile at our feet."

Luffy whistled. "You're smart!"

Nami smirked. "I try. Now, we know that they can't *all* be lying, since otherwise we wouldn't have any directions to follow. But that statue had a hint: *There's an odd one out* . Only *one* of these paintings is telling the truth!"

Zoro opened his mouth.

"We're not going to pull up each and every tile until we find it," Nami snapped. "It's a waste of petals."

He shut his mouth and scowled.

"It's simple logic," Nami continued. "If *one* and *only one* of these paintings is telling the truth, we can automatically rule out the ones who are pointing us to another painting."

"Why?" Usopp asked.

"Think about it: If we assume that *this* one—" she pointed to the red-wearing figure. "—is telling the truth, it must also mean that the one in *yellow* is telling the truth. Since they both can't be telling the truth, we can rule them both out. And the white one as well, since the yellow one is telling us to look there. Now if we look at the one in blue, we see that they're pointing us to the green one, so we can rule them both out as well. And that leaves us with . . ." she tapped the frame of the brown silhouette. "This one! This painting is the only one that can be telling the truth!"

They stared at her and applauded.

"Nice," Zoro said appreciatively.

Nami bowed and approached the brown painting. "East four steps, north two steps," she muttered to herself.

She and the others entered the room. Nami stood in front of the statue, turned right, took four steps, then turned left and took two steps. She knelt and picked up the tile beneath her feet. Nothing happened; with a big grin she held it up. "It worked!"

Usopp craned his neck to look at it. "It says . . . 18?"

"It looks like Zoro's rose," Luffy said cheerfully. The number was painted on in green.

Zoro scowled. "So what is that for?"

Nami shrugged. "Whatever it is, I hope it was worth it." She held onto the tile as they turned to leave.

Just before they reached the door, there was a horrible sound from THE LIARS' ROOM, as though something were being slashed and stabbed. It continued for perhaps five seconds; when all was still, Nami nervously pulled open the door, peeked inside, and screamed.

The others ran in. Luffy and Zoro jumped, and Usopp shrieked.

The brown painting had been destroyed. It was torn apart and dripping with red paint, covering the caption beneath it. The other paintings each held some kind of knife, covered in red paint. Each of their captions now read the same thing:

" LIAR!"

"Can we go?" Usopp whispered. "Now?"

They left the room as quickly as possible, shutting the door behind them.

"Oh!" Luffy exclaimed. "Dolls!"

Turning right from the room, they saw many dolls ahead of them, each dangling from a rope on the ceiling. They passed underneath them, going for the door at the end of the hall, but one doll fell as they passed it, landing with a *thump* on the ground.

Zoro knelt and narrowed his eyes. "It has a number 4 written on its foot," he called back. "It's in blue."

"18 and 4," Nami muttered to herself. They reached the door and checked a small box nestled into one of the panels.

*X * X + X = ?*

The first X was in red, the second in green, and the third in blue.

"Ah," Nami said after trying the handle—the door was locked. "This must be what those numbers are for. Something times eighteen plus four is the answer."

"Yeah, but I haven't seen a red number anywhere," Usopp pointed out.

Nami scowled. "It's gotta be around here somewhere."

"A red number?" Luffy asked. "There was one back there."

He ran back around the corner and returned soon. "It was in the corner of that painting that spit at us," he explained. "It said 9."

Nami groaned. "Tell us these things sooner!"

"Okay."

Nami looked up, doing calculations in her head. A minute later she entered a number—there was a click and the door swung open.

Inside were several small tree sculptures and a painting of an apple on the far wall. The tree sculpture directly ahead of them had a small wooden apple. Luffy drooled at the sight of it.

Nami plucked it from the sculpture easily. They exited the room and went back down the hallway with the shadow hand. As they did so, another hand leapt out of the previously blank wall, this time catching Nami in the side.

"Ah!" she shrieked, jumping away. An orange petal fell to the floor and a tiny bit of blood welled up.

Usopp whimpered. "Why does everything want to kill us?"

"Good question," Zoro said. "But we ain't the right fucking people to be asking."

They got out of the short hallway and turned left—the only direction they had not been yet. Ahead seemed to be a perfectly empty hall, other than a sculpture of lips resting on the wall.

It rasped as they approached. Nami and Usopp shrieked.

"Oh, get used to it," Zoro snapped, though he too looked a bit unnerved.

"Hah . . ." whispered the lips. "So hungry . . . food . . . need food . . ."

It seemed to notice the wooden apple Nami held, though *how* it noticed this was unknown.

"You have food . . ." it rasped. "That food . . . give it to me . . . !"

"Th-this?" Nami stammered. "T-Take it!"

She held up the apple and the lips snatched at it, crunching and munching away.

With a small burp, it whispered, "Tasty . . . thanks. You can go this way . . ."

The lips opened up—and they kept widening, opening up to the point where one could easily fit inside. The group shared glances; Luffy, being the stupidest—er, bravest, went inside and called for the others to follow.

When they made their way through the mouth, they found themselves in a long hallway lined with stop-motion images of a guillotine blade rising. They went down the hall, but just before they could reach the stairs, there was a swooshing sound from above.

"Get out of the way!" Zoro yelled, grabbing Nami's arm and yanking her backwards with him.

"Usopp!" Luffy yelled, pulling his friend out of the way.

An enormous guillotine blade crashed into the ground where they had been standing moments before, cracking the floor. As it slowly rose again, they breathed sighs of relief.

"You guys okay?" Zoro demanded. They all nodded, though they looked shaken.

"Let's go," Luffy said, standing quickly and helping Usopp up. "Before it falls again."

They dove for the stairs just before the blade slammed down again and ran downstairs.

No prizes for guessing who's coming next chapter

Blue Rose

It's very nice to find new reviews and favs/follows in my inbox only a few minutes after I wake up :D Thanks!

At some point, the color of the walls, floor, and ceiling had changed to a soft red. The four set down a long hall and turned left, passing a mural entitled *Breath* .

As they turned left again, they found another gray vase set upon a small table.

"Oh, good," Zoro said with relief. "Luffy, Nami, you two can stick your roses in there."

"Why?" Nami asked curiously.

Zoro pointed to Luffy, who was already putting his rose in. The petal he had lost bloomed back into place and he took it out, satisfied. Nami hesitantly put hers in and watched interestedly as the petal sprouted out at the base.

"Wow," she said, taking it back out. "That's . . . really useful."

They turned to a red door and entered easily, coming into a well-lit room full of paintings and sculptures.

"We need to keep going," Zoro pointed out when Nami made signs of wanting to stop and look at the artwork. She stepped back reluctantly and they moved forward.

The group quickly found another red door; however, this one was locked.

"There's probably a key around here," Usopp said, noting the small keyhole in the knob. They decided to split up around the room to

search for it.

Not a minute later Usopp, who had gone around a corner, came back screaming.

"What's wrong?" Zoro demanded. Luffy and Nami, who had been looking at twin sculptures titled *Uh* and *Ah* came back and looked at Usopp curiously.

"A-A painting!" Usopp shrieked, running to hide behind Zoro. "I was looking at a painting and then I turned around and it jumped off the wall!"

"Liar."

"I'm telling the truth!"

Luffy went around the corner and ran back almost immediately, followed closely by a woman coming out of a canvas. Her body, dressed nicely in a red dress, only came out halfway and she was dragging herself along the floor with her arms. She held a manic expression upon her face, and her long brown hair fell in curtains to the floor.

"Why did you bring her here!?" Nami screamed as they turned and ran. Unfortunately, there wasn't much room to run in that place.

"There was a key," Luffy said. "On the ground next to the painting lady!"

"Really?" Usopp exclaimed.

There was a snarl from the painting lady behind them.

"Okay, you guys distract her," Nami said. "I'll go grab that key!"

The others nodded and split up; Nami went to circle around in order to grab the key, while the others ran in different directions.

Nami darted around the hall, keeping an eye on the painting lady, who was pursuing Usopp (he was screaming in terror). She spotted the hallway—a plaque below where the painting had hung read *The Lady in Red* , and a red key lay on the ground beneath it.

She knelt and seized the key, whirling around and running back, where the others had managed to get themselves back in a group and chased together by the red lady.

"Hey!" she called. They made a beeline to the door; she unlocked it as quickly as possible; they piled inside and she slammed the door shut behind them.

A moment later there was banging on the door. Nami tentatively stopped leaning on the door and it did not open.

"Maybe they can't open doors," Usopp whispered, who had fallen to his knees.

They had ended up in a small room which only served as a passage to another door. The group (after Usopp had recovered from his shock) headed through the red door and came out into a long hallway. Straight ahead of them was a light blue vase on a table and a painting above it with the caption *Eternal Blessing* , featuring that same blue vase.

Electing to head left, they went through a door into a large room. To their right was a section with a gray vase on a small table; when they went to check it, they found that it was empty.

A door leading to a small room proved to be locked, and the window next to the door was fogged up. Going up ahead, they found a label reading *The Lady in Blue* —but there was nothing above it.

"Hey . . ." Nami said, kneeling. "There're . . ."

"Blue petals . . ." Usopp said. "A-And . . . blood?"

"Oh, shit," Zoro said. "What if—what if there are more of our crew down here?"

Luffy knelt and picked up a few of the blue petals. He sniffed them and his eyes widened.

"Sanji," he said.

"What?"

"These petals . . . they're from Sanji's rose." Luffy stared up at the others. "They smell like him. Like cooking stuff."

Nami took a few of the petals and sniffed them as well. "Spices . . . tea . . . it *does* remind me of Sanji- *kun* . . ."

"Oh, crap," Usopp whispered. "He's gotta be around here somewhere!"

"The other hall," Zoro remembered.

The group ran back out the door, down the hall, and through another door. Directly in front of them was a blond man wearing a suit, collapsed face-down onto the floor.

"Sanji!"

They rushed forward and lifted him up. His suit was stained with blood and the stuff dripped down his arms and face. His breathing was shallow and he cried out when he was touched.

Nami and Usopp propped him against the wall. "He's really hurt," Usopp whimpered. "He looks like he's dying!"

"Sanji!" Luffy exclaimed. "Can you hear us?"

"He's only half-conscious," Nami said, touching his shoulder gently but withdrawing her hand when he whispered, "Stop . . ."

"He's got a key," Luffy said, pointing to his hand. Zoro knelt and pried the cook's fingers off of the tiny key.

"Here—" Zoro yanked his bandana off his arm and tossed it to Nami. "See if you can stop the bleeding. Luffy, you and me go and get his rose."

Luffy nodded. Nami started wiping up Sanji's face gently with the bandana, tears filling her eyes. Usopp was flat-out crying.

Red and green ran down the hall, going back to the place with the gray vase. Zoro inserted the tiny key into the lock of the small room and pushed open the door.

They were met with a horrible sight. A woman in a canvas was on the ground—she looked exactly like the red lady who had chased them before, only she was wearing a blue dress. One of her hands clutched a blue rose while the other swiftly plucked off its petals.

"STOP!" Luffy yelled. The lady finally noticed them and abandoned the blue rose to chase after them instead.

"Zoro, distract her!" Luffy exclaimed. Zoro got her attention; while she got him into a corner, Luffy darted forward and seized the blue rose. Zoro tried to kick the woman, but she seized his leg and bit it.

"Agh!" he yelled in pain. A petal fell from his rose. Shaking her off, he jumped away and he and Luffy ran out, slamming the door shut behind them.

"We're safe," Luffy said. "They can't open—"

There was some banging on the window just before the blue lady burst out, shattering the glass completely. Both Luffy and Zoro yelled in shock and made a break for the door, running out and slamming it shut. There was more banging, but it soon fell silent.

They sighed in relief. Luffy held up the blue rose. It was much withered and held only three petals.

"I hope that vase has enough water," Zoro muttered, gesturing to the light blue vase. Luffy nodded and went over to stick the rose in.

Before their eyes, blue petals sprouted back in place and the rose straightened. Soon it was healthy and whole again, a dark blue rose with a sturdy green stem.

Luffy plucked it out and peered into the vase. "Hey, there's still water!"

Zoro glanced up at the painting. "Eternal blessing . . ." he muttered. "Long shot, but maybe this vase never runs out of water?"

Luffy attempted to pull the vase off of the table, but it remained firmly in place. Zoro placed his rose in and the petal he'd lost grew back.

They went back to the others as quickly as possible. Nami and Usopp looked up; Nami said in relief, "Thank goodness . . . his wounds closed just now."

Luffy and Zoro knelt by Sanji, whose eyes were beginning to flutter. He blinked hard and lifted his head.

"What the hell . . . ?" he mumbled. Seeing the four surrounding him, he yelled out in shock.

"Sanji, it's us!" Usopp exclaimed.

"Oh," Sanji said, relaxing. "Oh, it's you guys . . . Nami- *swan* ! What's going on?"

Luffy handed Sanji his blue rose. With a slight frown Sanji took it.

"What happened?" Zoro demanded.

Sanji ran his hands through his hair, crossing his legs and sitting up. "Well . . . I was checking out a painting in the gallery . . . and suddenly I realized that everyone had vanished. I walked around for a bit . . . and . . ." he frowned. "I just realized something . . . I heard banging from that window they had on the top floor, and I'm sure I didn't imagine it, because there were marks on the glass. But that was the second floor . . . there couldn't have been anyone outside of it, right?"

"Go on," Nami said.

Sanji smiled at her and continued. "Well, I kept looking around, but the front doors were locked. I found a staircase that wasn't there before, so I went down and I came out in a little room. When I went outside, I found this blue rose—" he held up said flower. "And a painting of a woman. The second I turned my back . . ." he shivered. "She jumped off of the wall. I know it sounds crazy. I tossed her the rose to distract her and managed to lock her in that little room . . ." he frowned again. "But when I came down this hall . . . wounds started appearing all over my body . . . it was so painful, and then I passed out . . ."

The others stared at him.

"I'm not Usopp," he snapped. "I'm telling the truth!"

"Hey," Usopp muttered.

"We believe you," Nami snapped. "But you *tossed her* your *rose* ? That was really stupid."

"Oh, my Nami- *swan* is so lovely even when she's berating me," Sanji cooed. "What do you mean, Nami- *swan* ?"

The other four held up their roses. "These are all ours," Luffy explained. "If we get hurt, a petal comes off, and if a petal comes off, we get hurt."

Sanji stared at him. "I . . . what?"

"I see," Sanji muttered, staring at his blue rose. "I guess that *was* really stupid."

"Anyway, we're trying to find a way out, obviously," Zoro said. "By the way, you and Luffy should get cleaned up. That vase back there—I don't think it's ever gonna run out of water, so we can use that."

Nami brought back out Zoro's bandana, went to the vase, and came back with it soaking wet. She carefully mopped up the blood on Luffy's arm and on Sanji's body, ignoring his cries of love.

"I'll give this back to you when it's clean," Nami promised Zoro, slipping it into her pocket. He shrugged.

"You really lost your ability?" Sanji asked Luffy. He grabbed Luffy's cheeks and pulled.

"Ow!" Luffy whined. Sanji let go. "Why does everyone keep doing that today?"

Sanji then experimentally kicked the wall. "Ow," he muttered. "I guess I lost my strength too."

"So . . . can we go?" Usopp asked hopefully. "I want to get out of here as soon as possible . . ."

"Yeah," Sanji agreed. "Being in a place like this . . . I'd probably go insane if I stayed for too long. Nami- *swan* , don't worry, I'll protect you from danger!"

The group moved forward, past the spot covered in Sanji's blood. Just ahead was another painting with a wiggling tongue. As they approached, it spit on the floor and Sanji screamed.

"It's not a big deal," Usopp said, smirking. "It's not hurting us."

Sanji scowled and picked himself up.

"Says the one who was screaming about it not thirty minutes ago," Zoro muttered.

They passed the painting, still wiggling its tongue, and came upon another red door, this one blocked by a blue headless statue. Luffy and Zoro backed off warily.

"What?" Nami asked, looking at them.

"One of those things chased us earlier," Luffy said, looking at the statue suspiciously.

Sanji approached it and placed a hand on its arm. "Well, this one's not doing anything," he pointed out. With a great heave he shoved the statue aside. "Geez, that thing's heavy."

He pulled open the red door and the group stepped into the next room.

Your Flower, Pretty Please?

I should probably type these things earlier. Also I have a history test on Monday. Why haven't I studied yet? I should do that. *does nothing* dammit.

The group stepped into a room painted in a dim gray. The room was fairly small; ahead was a straight passage to another part of the mysterious gallery, and the walls on either side displayed one portrait each: *Sorrowful Bride* and *Sorrowful Groom* , depicting two forlorn subjects. Directly in front of each portrait was a sculpture of a shadowy hand: The one on the left had a title card which read *Sorrowful Bride's Left Hand* , while the right one read *Sorrowful Bride's Right Hand* . Both shadow hands were twitching their fingers.

"W-Will they attack?" Usopp whimpered, hiding behind Sanji.

Zoro narrowed his eyes at each of the works. "I dunno. Be careful. But it looks like those hands are stuck in the ground."

"What a lovely young lady," Sanji said admiringly, gazing at the portrait of the young woman in the wedding dress. "I wonder why she's sad . . ."

"Who cares about that right now?" Nami said irritably. "Can we keep going?"

The group walked single-file down the narrow passageway into a much larger room. To their right was a dead-end where a simple painting of coffee and cake hung; up ahead were more turns; and to the left was a door, and beyond that a passage turning right.

"Let's split up," Luffy suggested. "Me 'n Zoro'll go one way and you guys can go another."

The others agreed to this, so Luffy and Zoro went straight ahead and turned right while the other three went left.

Luffy spotted a door immediately and pulled it open. The inside was completely empty except for a painting hanging on the far wall and a stool just beneath it.

Walking forward, Luffy found a small doorknob resting on the stool. The painting featured exactly the same stool and knob with the simple title of *Doorknob on Stool* .

Luffy curiously picked up the knob. When he glanced up at the painting again, he saw that the knob from it had disappeared and the title had changed to *Empty Stool* .

Zoro looked in, annoyed. "Hurry up, Luffy, I found something weird."

"Something weird?" Luffy said excitedly, sticking the knob in his pocket—the other one held his red rose. He ran out, crashing into Zoro.

"Ah—sorry," he said carelessly, standing. "Where's the weird thing?"

Zoro scowled and picked himself up. He pointed around the corner to the right of the door that Luffy had just left. Luffy immediately went around it and stared.

At the end of the short hall was a strange painting. On a dark blue background, light blue eyes and a smile had been painted, resembling a face. They were painted in a way that made the face look unnervingly insane.

Luffy cautiously approached it, Zoro close behind. The painting blinked at Luffy, giggled, and said, "Hello there!"

"Whoa!" Luffy exclaimed. "Another mystery thing!"

"It talks," Zoro muttered, staring at it suspiciously.

The painting seemed to eye Luffy's rose. "Hey . . ." it murmured. "Mind giving that flower to me?"

Luffy covered his rose protectively. "Why?"

"I just wanna little sniff," the painting wheedled, giving off another giggle. "C'mon . . . pretty please?"

Luffy frowned and stepped back. "No."

"If you give me that flower . . ." the painting said, still grinning maniacally, "I'll let you go through . . ."

The face disappeared and was replaced with a doorknob. Luffy reached out, but the face reappeared quickly. "Flower first!"

Luffy stuck out his tongue and turned around. "C'mon, let's go."

The painting laughed insanely as Luffy and Zoro strode away.

Usopp carefully reached out a hand and slowly opened the door. He peered inside, saw something, and immediately shut it, saying, "Well, there's nothing in there, so let's go!"

Sanji raised an eyebrow and opened the door. Sighing, he said, "Usopp, get a grip."

Immediately ahead of them was a title card reading *Labyrinth* . The passage inside the door split off to the left and right.

"It's just a stupid maze," Sanji continued. "And it's worth checking out."

"B-But—" Usopp cried, "th-there's this scary story about a maze and a bull-man—"

"Yeah," Sanji said. "A *story* . As in, it never happened. Tell you what, I'll check this place out and you and Nami- *swan* go look around

somewhere else. If I'm not out in ten minutes, tell Luffy and Zoro."

"Are you sure?" Nami asked with a small worried frown on her face. "Not to be pessimistic, but what if there *is* something weird in there?"

Sanji smiled reassuringly. "Don't worry, Nami- *swan* , I'll be fine!"

He stepped inside and shut the door. Nami and Usopp, after throwing worried glances back at it, went forward.

"Okay," Sanji muttered. "There's a trick . . ."

He turned right and moved forward, keeping his right hand trailing along the wall.

"At least I'm not some directionally-challenged swordsman," he muttered to himself.

When he glanced down a passage to the left, he yelled in shock. A red headless statue was coming straight for him. It wasn't even running, merely meandering along as if it had all the time in the world.

"Oh yeah, they said that one of those things chased them," he muttered. He pressed forward, deciding to ignore the statue, which continued its casual pace in his general direction.

He turned left further ahead but was forced to take another sudden left when he saw another headless statue heading (no pun intended) towards him. He narrowed his eyes and looked around; he could go straight, left, or right. Trying to stick with his strategy, he turned right.

He quickly turned left again at the end of that passage and saw at the end of the new passage a button on the wall. He raised an eyebrow, strode up to it, and pressed it. He thought he heard something outside the maze.

Scowling heavily, he turned and found himself staring at a headless statue.

"Ah!" he yelled in shock. The statue reached out, grabbed him, and pushed him against the wall while swiping his torso with a clawed hand. A petal fell from his rose, which was tucked into his breast pocket. The statue swiped at his rose now, and it lost another petal. Sanji felt a stinging in his arm.

Thinking quickly, he ducked down and slid between the statue's legs, straightening up on the other side and running before it had a chance to turn around.

Sanji turned to the left and then to the left again, running down the passageway and turning left one last time to see the exit ahead of him, as well as another headless statue at the end. He put on a burst of speed, flung open the door, and slammed it shut behind him before he could be attacked any more by them.

"This place is gonna drive me nuts," he muttered to himself.

He went right and turned the corner to find Nami and Usopp near the end of the hall, examining something on the wall.

"Nami- *swan* !" he called. "I have returned, my love!"

Nami and Usopp looked up, visibly relieved.

"So what happened?" Usopp asked as Sanji approached them.

"Hm . . . well, I pressed a button," Sanji said simply. "I don't even know if the damn thing *did* anything."

Usopp frowned. "Huh."

Nami adjusted her rose slightly; it was tucked carefully behind her ear. "Sanji- *kun* , Usopp and I found this." She pointed to the thing they'd been examining.

Sanji looked at it. It appeared to be a door, but it had no knob. Pushing it yielded no results.

"Okay," he muttered. "Let's leave this for now and see if those two found anything useful."

"This insane painting told us that it'd let us go through a door if we gave it one of our roses," Zoro explained. "So we said no, of course."

"A creepy maze," Sanji said simply. "I found a button, pressed it, dunno if it did anything, lost a couple petals along the way."

Usopp stared at him. "You didn't mention that!"

Sanji shrugged. "It's just two, it's not a big deal."

"We also found a door with no knob," Nami added.

Luffy brightened. "I found a doorknob!"

He pulled it out of his pocket.

"Oh," Usopp said in surprise. "Okay, great. That's convenient."

They stood around the knob-less door while Nami carefully inserted the knob into the small hole. She turned it and the door swung open with a click.

The room was extremely small, only big enough for a grown man to stand upright in. The wall directly ahead had a message that read, *Check behind the big tree* .

"That was fucking pointless," Zoro snapped.

The others nodded. Nami shut the door and they headed down the passageway.

"Maybe we should check the maze again," Sanji suggested. "I don't really wanna go back there, but I could've missed something."

But as they turned the corner, Usopp pointed. "Um . . . did we check *that* door?"

A door had appeared at the end of the previously empty dead-end.

"That wasn't there before," Nami muttered.

Luffy ran ahead of them and entered the room. The others followed. It was fairly wide, and contained four sculptures.

The first sculpture featured a large wine glass cut diagonally with a cushion nestled inside, titled *Wine Sofa* .

"That looks pretty uncomfortable," Sanji muttered.

The second was a large, forlorn-looking bust with the title *Melancholy* .

"If he's been stuck here all this time, I don't blame him for being sad," Usopp said after Nami told Luffy what the title was.

The third was a colorful model of a skeleton entitled *Puzzle* .

"It's Brook!" Luffy and Usopp exclaimed together.

The fourth sculpture was a tree that looked unnervingly like a person if you squinted and tilted your head the right way. Its title was *Feeling* .

"That's creepy," Nami said.

"Oh," Usopp said. "The message . . ."

He walked around to the other side of the tree and bent to examine it. He raised his eyebrows, reached a hand in, and drew out something small and shiny: A ring.

"I wonder what this is for?" he said aloud, showing it to the others.

"It's a wedding ring," Sanji said in surprise. "Wait . . . Usopp, here. Guys, this way!"

Usopp gave him the ring and the others followed him out of the room and back to the portraits of the wed couple and the bride's hands.

"If these are the hands of the bride," Sanji explained, gesturing to the twitching sculptures, "they're missing something vital to marriage: a *ring* ."

"Oh, you're right," Nami said in surprise.

"So shove it on one of the fingers and we'll get going," Zoro snapped.

Sanji wagged a finger condescendingly. "Really, that just shows how uncultured you are. Wedding rings must always go on the *fourth* finger of the *left* hand."

He confidently strode to *Sorrowful Bride's Left Hand* and carefully slipped the ring onto the fourth finger. The fingers immediately stopped twitching, and when Sanji looked up, he saw that the bride and groom of the portraits were smiling, and their titles had changed to *Blessed Bride* and *Blessed Groom* . The bride tossed the bouquet of flowers up in the air and out of the frame, and to everyone's surprise they came floating down from the ceiling.

Sanji immediately tried to catch the bouquet, but the flowers floated down into Luffy's arms. He grinned and said, "I got them!"

Sanji fell to the ground in disappointment. "No way," he muttered. "No way that shitty rubber is gonna get married before I do."

"What?" Luffy asked.

"Nothing," Sanji growled, standing up dejectedly. Usopp and Zoro smirked.

"Luffy," Zoro said, turning to him, "that painting . . ."

Luffy brightened. "Oh yeah! It wanted a flower!"

The group went back to the insane blue painting, whose eyes fell upon the bouquet and lit up.

"Take them," Luffy said firmly, shoving the flowers at the thing.

"Thanks," giggled the painting. "Well . . . I was *famished* anyway!"

It snatched at the flowers and chewed them up with unnecessarily disgusting noises. When it was done, it gave a sigh of happiness and said, "Thanks, thanks *so* much, I was *so* hungry . . . go ahead, take this door!"

The face disappeared again, replaced by the doorknob. Luffy turned the knob and the painting swung off of the wall, revealing a hole. They stepped through and let the canvas swing shut behind them.

Originally I was going to write "Scowling heavily, he turned and found himself face-to-face with a headless statue." but then I realized . . .

Pink Rose and Purple Rose

They found themselves in a long hallway lined with large, creepy mannequin heads. Their eyes and mouth were painted on in sloppy red.

"Oh, good," Sanji said with a shudder.

"What?" Usopp said curiously. "You don't like mannequins? I mean, I know these things are creepy . . ."

"No, you're right," Sanji said, gritting his teeth. "I don't like mannequins or dolls. They creep me out."

"But you were fine with that headless statue earlier," Nami pointed out.

Sanji nodded. "It's fine if they don't have a head or a face."

The others decided to leave his odd phobia at that. Luffy and Zoro led the way down the hall lined with mannequin heads. Nami and Usopp, who seemed to feel bad about leaving Sanji to solve the labyrinth on his own, walked on either side of him as if to protect him from the disembodied heads.

The door at the end of the hall opened to a large horizontal passage. To their left they saw the painting of the red lady, and far down to their right they could see the arm of a headless statue sticking out.

They remained frozen for a minute.

"Will they attack?" Usopp whispered.

"Dunno," Zoro muttered.

Luffy decided to go towards the painting of the red lady. The others reluctantly followed. To their surprise, the lady didn't leap off of the

wall, even when they walked right up to the canvas. To the right of her was the blue lady, to the right of the blue lady was who they presumed to be the Lady in Green, and to the right of *her* was a woman who could only be the Lady in Yellow.

"Isn't it a bad sign," Nami said tentatively, "to be surprised when a painting *doesn't* leap off of the wall?"

The others nodded firmly.

"It looks like they won't attack," Zoro said at last. They continued down the hall, passing the two right turns and favoring the one at the end once they couldn't go straight anymore.

Continuing this way, they found two doors to their left and then to the left. The first door opened easily to reveal a table with a vase sitting on it and an easel diagonal to the vase. To their disappointment, the vase was devoid of water.

"What's the point of this room?" Zoro snapped after a moment.

Usopp narrowed his eyes and sat at the easel, picking up the palette and paintbrush that lay there. "This looks like a painter's setup," he mused, glancing up at the vase. He dabbed the paintbrush into some of the gray paint on the palette and began painting the vase and table, occasionally checking up at his subjects.

"We don't have time for you to goof around," Sanji snapped.

"No, hang on, I'm almost done," Usopp muttered. He put the finishing touches on the painting, set down the tools, and grinned at the others.

There was a sound from somewhere in the area. They looked around and Sanji frowned.

"I heard a sound like that when I pressed that button in the labyrinth," he said. "Usopp, I think you did something."

"Really?" Usopp said, brightening. "See, I wasn't goofing off, I was *helping* !"

"You didn't know you were helping," Zoro pointed out.

Usopp sighed and stood.

The group left the room and checked the other door. This one had a number pad next to it with the question above it, "How many paintings of women are there in this room?"

"I'll take care of it," Sanji offered. He quickly left the group and came back after exploring the large area.

"Fourteen paintings," he reported. "I also found three more doors. Two of them were locked, and the other was unlocked, but I figured I should wait for you guys before checking out that one."

Luffy punched in the number and there was a click. He swung open the door, said, "Oh!" and grinned widely.

Something small leapt up and seized Luffy around the torso, holding tightly as Luffy stumbled slightly.

"Luffy!" Chopper cried. "I-I wasn't worried at all, you bastard!"

Luffy grinned and patted Chopper's head. "I'm glad to see you too! Hi, Robin!"

Robin, who had just stood up, smiled brightly. "Well, it's good to see that none of you are injured," she said. "Do any of you have any idea what's happening?"

Chopper was going around and hugging the rest of the crew.

"Robin- *chwan* !" Sanji cried. "Your beauty is like an oasis in a desert!"

"I wish we knew what was happening," Nami said regretfully as she handed Chopper to Zoro. "We're all trying to find a way out. What happened with you two?"

The five plus Chopper came into the room, leaving the door open in case they needed to make a quick escape. Inside was a vase resting on a table in the middle, where a pink rose and a purple rose stuck out. In the corner was a small bookshelf, which they assumed that Robin and perhaps Chopper had been studying.

They sat in a circle after Zoro pulled Chopper off his head.

"Chopper and I were studying a sculpture called *Embodiment of Spirit* when we realized that everyone had vanished," Robin explained. "We thought we heard someone coughing, but the only thing even resembling a human nearby was a painting titled *The Coughing Man* ."

"Oh, so it was him who coughed," Luffy said reasonably.

Robin frowned. "Er . . . well, we found a set of stairs leading down not far from the rose sculpture. We found ourselves in this room, and when we turned around, the stairs had vanished." She nodded to the door that the others had come through. "That door was locked until you five came in. We've been here for maybe half an hour."

"That's pretty much what happened to all of us," Zoro said. "Looking at something, suddenly everyone's gone, found a mysterious staircase, and here we are. Also, everything's trying to kill us."

"What?" Chopper whimpered.

Robin frowned slightly. "I notice you all have roses," she said. Luffy's and Usopp's were in their respective pockets, Zoro's stuck out of his *haramaki* , Nami's was tucked behind her ear, and Sanji's was in his breast pocket.

"Yeah, those two are probably yours," Usopp said, pointing to the roses on the table.

Robin frowned again. "And how do we know whose is whose?"

Nami looked thoughtful. "I didn't really think about that. I just took the rose that I felt more connected to, and that was the right one.

"But if you need help . . ." Nami took the purple rose out of the vase and breathed in deeply. She smiled and handed it to Robin. "This one's yours!"

Robin took it, still frowning. Chopper took the pink one that was handed to him. They each smelled theirs and said that they didn't smell anything unusual.

"It's probably because they're your own," Luffy said in a rare moment of insight. "Here, try mine—" he pushed his red rose at Robin, who cautiously breathed in before smiling.

"I see," she said. "Rubber and meat . . . that's you, Luffy."

"Anyway," Zoro said as Luffy pocketed his rose again, "you guys aren't very strong and neither of you can use your Devil Fruit powers."

"How did you know?" Chopper exclaimed.

"Oh," Chopper said at last. "So you guys aren't strong either . . ."

He reached up for Luffy's cheeks, but Luffy quickly leaned back and covered them protectively.

"And you say that the paintings can come alive and attack?" Robin asked. "With all the oddities that I've experienced in my lifetime and since coming to this gallery, I don't know why I should be surprised."

Zoro shrugged. "Just take good care of yourself and your rose."

Robin nodded and tucked her rose behind her ear as Chopper placed his between his antlers.

"Are these the ones that attacked earlier?" Robin asked as they passed a row of three *Lady in* paintings.

"Yeah," Usopp said, glancing back at Chopper, who was hiding behind his legs. "The ones in this room haven't done anything yet, though . . ."

"Ah, here we are," Sanji said, stopping short. In front of him was a nondescript gray door.

They entered to find a completely empty room, other than the large square mirror that hung at the other end. Robin shut the door behind them and the group approached the mirror.

It really did seem to be a regular mirror. Their appearances weren't strange or disfigured in any way.

"I need to wash this thing," Sanji muttered, plucking at his bloodstained suit.

Chopper suddenly noticed the blood and screamed. "Sanji, you're bleeding!"

"Not anymore, I'm not," Sanji said. "Don't worry about it, Chopper, I'm fine. My rose is healthy, see?"

Chopper frowned at him. The group turned around to leave when they found the door blocked by another creepy mannequin head.

Sanji shuddered.

"He's afraid of mannequins and dolls," Nami whispered to Chopper and Robin.

"When did that thing get in the room?" Usopp whimpered.

The group turned back to the mirror, only to find the mannequin head seemingly hovering just behind Sanji's shoulder.

Sanji screamed and stumbled backwards, falling over and scrambling away from the mannequin head. His face changed from fear to anger; he stood, growled, "You . . . damn . . ." and kicked the thing into the wall, shattering it into pieces. It seemed that he was at least as strong as a typical grown man, even if his monstrous strength wasn't present.

"I swear, this place is driving me crazy," he muttered. "It was just a stupid mannequin head after all. C'mon, let's get going."

The others nervously followed him, as he seemed on edge and likely to lash out at anything. But when they left that room, they found two mannequin heads on either side of the door. Sanji yelled out in shock and tried to calm his breathing.

"It's alright," Robin said soothingly. "They won't attack."

Sanji smiled at her and relaxed a bit. "Yeah . . . I hope you're right, Robin- *chwan* ."

Around the corner at the end of the hall, something came around the corner: It was the green lady—no, *a* green lady, since there seemed to be multiple copies of those paintings. She crawled towards them at an alarming pace with a maniac grin.

"Run!" Luffy yelled. They darted down the hall to their right and down a narrow passage to the left. Immediately to their left were a red lady and a gray key lying on the ground in front of a blank part of the wall.

Zoro darted forward, seized the key, and turned back just as the green lady rounded the corner and the red lady leapt off of the wall. Chopper, Nami, and Usopp screamed; the group dodged her and made their way to a door to the right of the small passage. Behind them, a blue lady leapt off of the wall.

"Hurry!" Sanji snapped.

Zoro fumbled with the key, managed to stick it in, turned it, and threw open the door. They piled inside and he slammed the door shut behind them.

The room was cozy-looking. Three tall bookshelves were in the far left corner, a large painting hung on the far center wall, and a white couch stood in the middle of the room.

"I think we'll be safe here," Sanji said, catching his breath.

"Yeah," Nami said. "They can't get through doors . . ."

"Oh, good," Chopper said, slumping against the wall.

Luffy grinned. "We can rest here for a bit, right?"

Zoro nodded. "I think so."

Usopp sighed in relief. "Thank god . . . hey, Robin, what's up?"

Robin had left the group and was slowly approaching the painting, her eyes fixed on it. The others came up with her.

"What are you—" Nami started to say, but her attention was caught by the painting and she stared silently with the others.

There were seven subjects in two rows. In the back row, the first subject stood on the left: A tall woman with long, white, wavy hair, large eyes, and a brown overcoat. The second subject on the right of her was a man with hair that stuck out far on either side of his black top hat; he had a five o'clock shadow and wore mismatched clothing. To his right was another woman: This one had magenta hair, which was shaved on either side, and the middle section tied back in a ponytail; her shirt was plaid, and a cigarette stuck out of her mouth. The fourth and last subject of the back row was a man with a large chef's hat, an apron around his waist, and his long blond mustache braided on both sides.

In the front row, the fifth subject was a young boy. His outfit could have belonged to an upper-class citizen if it weren't so scruffy. His hair was blond and curly. The sixth subject was kneeling between the fifth and seventh; a young lady with short platinum blond hair and a light green gown. Finally, the seventh subject was a young girl with dark, short hair and a pink t-shirt. None of the subjects were smiling; all looked very serious and faced forward solemnly, as if in an old-fashioned photograph.

The title of the piece was *Family and Friends* .

Family and Friends, and a Place to Rest

For a whole minute no one moved or spoke. Then—

"What is this doing here?" Nami whispered, still staring at Bellemère.

Her words seemed to break the others out of their reverie.

"I dunno," Zoro muttered, his eyes darting from Kuina to the other subjects of the painting. "It feels like whoever or whatever's behind this shit knew we were coming here. First the roses, now this . . ."

Sanji looked down and laughed shakily. "I didn't think I'd be seeing the old man so soon," he said to himself.

"T-They're okay, aren't they?" Usopp whispered, his eyes darting between Kaya and Zeff, the only two he had ever met. "They're not . . . ?"

Chopper had tears in his eyes. "I-I dunno about the others . . . but Doctor is . . ."

Usopp knelt and held him comfortingly. "If we find the guy who painted this thing, I'll beat him up," he promised.

"Robin, is she . . ." Nami whispered, looking at the woman with white hair.

Robin nodded. "I only met her once. To see her again, like this . . ." she frowned slightly. "It's disturbing, to say the least. As far as we know, Guertena is the artist of every work in this twisted gallery—at least, from what you five have told us."

Nami nodded.

"The thing is," Robin continued, "Weiss Guertena died sixty years ago. I don't think he could have known *any* of these people."

"This isn't helping my sanity," Sanji muttered.

Luffy slowly reached out a hand and brushed his fingers against the painted figure of the blond-haired boy.

"Why . . ." he said softly. "Why can't *this* painting come alive . . . ?"

Zoro gently took Luffy's outstretched arm and lowered it. "Don't," he said quietly. "It's not worth it."

Luffy looked at him and nodded slowly. "Yeah," he agreed, turning away from the painting.

Sanji turned away as well, looking around the rest of the room. "I don't think there's anything else in here worth checking out," he said abruptly.

"One moment," Robin said. She stepped away from the painting at last and went over to the bookshelves. A second later she frowned.

"Odd," she murmured. "These aren't real—they're sculpted into the shelves."

"Can we leave?" Chopper whimpered. "It's nice and safe here, but we gotta get out of this gallery . . ."

"Yeah, we should get going," Sanji agreed. He strode to the door and tried to turn the handle.

"Open it already," Zoro snapped.

Sanji jiggled the handle. "It's locked," he said bleakly. "We're stuck in here."

"You gotta be kidding!" Usopp shrieked. "It was open just a few minutes ago!"

THUMP THUMP THUMP

Sanji backed away from the door. "They're on the other side," he hissed. "This isn't good . . ."

THUMP THUMP THUMP

"There must be another way out," Robin said, her eyes darting around the room. "If only there was a window . . ."

THUMP THUMP THUMP

"Those painting women can get through windows," Zoro said. "It's probably better that there aren't any."

THUMP THUMP THUMP

BANG-BANG-CRASH

Nami, Usopp, and Chopper screamed. A yellow lady had burst through the wall to the right of the painting.

"She hasn't noticed us yet," Zoro hissed. *" Run!"*

Everyone ducked around the woman and crawled through the large hole in the wall.

Outside was pure chaos. Painting ladies of every color roamed the halls— *how* could they crawl so quickly with only their hands?—and the headless statues had come alive, clumping around with arms raised like Frankenstein's monster. There were more mannequin heads lining the halls than ever before.

"This way!" Sanji yelled. "There's another door! Maybe it's unlocked now!"

The others followed him, dodging around the possessed artworks, occasionally getting scratched or bit—

"There!"

Sanji pointed to a slightly ajar door down an aisle. He and the others ducked and dodged around a red headless statue and threw themselves inside it—Zoro slammed the door shut behind them and everyone let out a sigh of relief.

"Thank god," Usopp sighed. "We all made it out alive . . ."

Luffy looked around and his eyes widened. "Nami," he said quietly.

"Huh?" Chopper said blankly.

"Nami's missing," Luffy said in horror.

Sanji's eyes widened. "Nami- *swan* !" he yelled. "How could I have been so careless!?"

He threw open the door and charged back into the room. The headless statues and painting ladies had not ceased their relentless roaming and assault.

Sanji quickly found Nami. She was lying on the ground, surrounded by painting ladies and headless statues. Her withered orange rose was next to her, two petals clinging to the stalk. As Sanji approached, one of the red ladies took a swipe at her, and one of the petals broke off.

" *DON'T TOUCH HER!* " Sanji roared, and he kicked the red lady in the face. She snarled and bit his leg—a blue petal fell to the ground. Sanji kicked her away and turned to Nami, throwing himself over her and protecting her and her rose from further damage.

"It's okay, Nami- *swan* ," Sanji whispered. "They won't hurt you anymore."

He scooped her up, holding her away from the harmful scratches of the artwork, and tucked her dying rose next to his own relatively healthy one. He ran as lightly as possible back to the door, getting scratched along the way—but refusing to let Nami be injured.

He finally charged back through the door and fell to his knees. The others gasped.

"Is she—?" Chopper whimpered.

Nami was covered in blood. It dripped down her skin and dyed her clothes dark.

"She's alive," Sanji whispered, tears falling from his eyes. "Barely . . . we need to heal her rose *now* ."

Luffy gently picked her up. Sanji looked at him desperately and Luffy nodded. "Don't worry, I got her," he said quietly. Sanji relaxed slightly.

He and the others followed Luffy down the nondescript and unusually quiet gray hallway. At the end was a door. Zoro opened it for Luffy and the pirate captain carried his navigator in.

The room was relatively small. An abstract painting titled *Untitled* hung on the wall opposite. Short bookshelves were on either side of a small table bearing a light blue vase.

"Thank god," Zoro said in relief. "That one doesn't run out of water."

Chopper and Robin watched curiously as Sanji tenderly placed Nami's rose inside. Before their eyes, the petals bloomed into place, the stalk straightened, and within a minute it was full and healthy once more.

Luffy gently laid Nami on the ground. Her eyes were still closed, but her breathing was stronger.

Sanji took off his jacket, folded it up, and placed it beneath her head. "We'll let her rest," he said quietly, "and then we'll get going when we're all ready. Any objections?"

The others remained silent. Sanji took out his handkerchief, dipped it into the vase, and began cleaning the blood off of Nami as the others placed their roses in to regain the few petals they'd lost.

They had been in the room for perhaps five minutes. Robin was examining some of the books (as these were real, readable things) while the others either sat against the wall or chatted quietly.

"I hate myself," Sanji said, staring at the floor. "I let Nami- *swan* get hurt and I kicked a lady . . ."

"One of the painting ladies, right?" Usopp asked. "Don't beat yourself up over *that* . They're not real."

"If it helps," Robin said, taking out a small notebook and pen, "I read that Guertena once stated that those women are really men in drag."

Sanji raised an eyebrow. "That *does* help."

"Really? He did?" Zoro said in surprise.

Robin glanced over at him and winked, pursing her lips as if to shush him. She put her pen to the paper, but frowned and shook it.

"Oh, it's out of ink," she said regretfully. "I forgot to refill before we came here."

"Oh—" Usopp reached into his pocket and tossed something to Robin. She caught it easily and looked at it. It was a small bottle of Tabasco sauce.

"You can use that in place of ink," Usopp offered, grinning.

"Ah . . . thank you," Robin said in surprise with a slight smile. "That's rather creative."

She dipped her pen in the sauce and started writing something down.

"Hey, that reminds me . . ." Luffy reached into his pocket and brought out something small. He handed it to Chopper.

"Candy?" Chopper whispered excitedly.

Luffy nodded and grinned. "I stole it from the kitchen earlier! But it turned out that I don't like that kind. I had to eat five of them before I realized it. So you can have that one!"

"Thanks!" Chopper said happily. "I'll eat it later." He lifted up his hat and stowed the candy underneath there.

"Sorry, you stole *what* from the kitchen?" Sanji said, looking up at Luffy irritably.

Luffy looked away and whistled.

"Mm . . ."

Everyone looked to the floor to see Nami slowly sitting up. "Where are we?" she murmured.

"Nami- *swan* !" Sanji cried. "My love, I'm so sorry for letting you get hurt, I am not worthy of—"

"Oh," Nami gasped. "I remember . . . guys, I'm so sorry—they caught me—"

"Shut up," Zoro said. "It's fine."

She smiled slightly.

"Don't you speak to a lady like—" Sanji began, but Nami cut him off.

"Sanji- *kun* , it's fine," she said. "Did you bring me back here . . . ? Thank you."

As Sanji sang praises to the heavens of how lovely it was to receive Nami- *swan* 's thanks, Nami stood, checked herself over, and handed Sanji back his coat.

"This was a new outfit, too," she said with a sigh, staring down at her blood-stained clothes.

"Are we all ready to head out?" Robin asked, shutting the book and replacing it gently. The others gave words of assent.

"We should get going, then," she said, and everyone stepped out of the small room. Just outside was a gray staircase, which they descended to the floor below.

Light Blue Rose and Black Rose

The group descended the stairs. At some point, the walls, floor, and ceiling changed to deep purple, matching Robin's rose.

"Sanji- *kun* ?" Nami said as they walked, glancing at his rose. "Should we stop at the next vase?"

"Hm?" Sanji said. "Nami- *swan* , I used the vase in that last room . . ."

"Really?" Nami said, frowning. "But your rose . . ."

Sanji glanced down. "What about it . . . ?"

"The center . . . it's looking withered," she said, pointing. "I'm not sure if any petals are missing, but . . ."

He took his rose out and examined it closely. "It looks fine to me," he said at last. "Nami- *swan* , forgive me, but are you sure it wasn't just a shadow . . . ?"

Nami gently took it and examined it. "No, I'm sure it's . . . well, never mind," she said, handing it back. "If you're not hurt, maybe I *am* imagining it."

Sanji carefully tucked it back into his pocket and chuckled. "Don't worry about me, Nami- *swan* ."

They continued down the hall. To their left, a large, roomy area took up much space: It was blocked off by ropes, a section of which was missing, and contained three immobile headless statues: red, blue, and yellow. On one wall was a small bookshelf, and on the wall opposite the group were three paintings. The first was of a red button, the second was of a green button, and the third was of a blue button.

Robin glanced at the bookshelf. "Excuse me for a moment," she said. She stepped inside the roped-off area and started walking to the shelf.

Almost immediately, the yellow headless statue raised its arms in front of it and started moving. At the same time, the ropes blocking off the section broke off and tied themselves together. Their ends stretched and multiplied, crisscrossing up and up and up until the entire area was blocked off, leaving the six Strawhats with only a broken-up view of their archaeologist.

"Robin!" Luffy yelled. "Hey, are you okay!?"

"I'm fine," Robin replied. "That was rather startling. Don't worry, I've figured out how to leave—I just need to look at this book first."

"I'm not against literature, but this is hardly the time for reading," Sanji snapped. He then looked rather upset. "Robin- *chwan* , I'm sorry, I didn't mean to—"

"It's fine," Robin said. She sounded distracted—she must have started reading already. "I can walk and read at the same time; it shouldn't be difficult to avoid this thing."

About a minute of silence passed. The six could barely see her through the ropes, but it seemed that at least she hadn't been caught by the statue.

Soon there was a small sound and part of the rope section untied itself and fell away, making a doorway-sized hole. Robin carefully exited. As soon as she was out, the ropes retied themselves, trapping the statues inside.

"Robin, are you okay?" Chopper whispered.

"I'm fine," Robin replied with a gentle smile. "Sorry about that—I had no idea that would happen."

"So what was in that book?" Usopp asked.

Robin looked thoughtful. "It seemed to be a diary from Guertena himself. It only contained a single passage on the first page . . . the rest were blank." She took a small breath. "'It is said that spirits dwell in objects into which people put their feelings. I've always thought that the same must be for artwork. So today, I shall immerse myself in my work, so as to impart myself into my creations.'"

"What does that even *mean* ?" Zoro demanded.

"It almost sounds like Guertena literally poured his soul into his artwork," Robin said, "to give them 'life,' so to speak."

"So—" Nami said nervously. "The reason these things are alive—?"

Robin nodded. "I can't say why they're coming after us, however."

They continued down the hall and turned left, and then left again. They passed two apparently benign paintings titled *Milk Puzzle* (featuring white puzzle pieces) and *Fleeting Thoughts on a Moonlit Night* (which was a painting of a blossoming tree). At the end of the hall was a violet door.

Luffy frowned and pressed his ear to the door.

" Yo-ho-ho-ho, oh my, oh my . . ."

" One, two, one, two, ow! Now to the right!"

He grinned. "It's them!" He pulled back and looked at the door. It had an alphabetical keypad in the center, and a small inscription above it which read, *What is the name of Guertena's final work?*

"Who's them?" Sanji asked irritably. "And how the hell are we supposed to know what the answer is?"

"I know what it is," Robin offered. "I read about it earlier. It's a painting of a little girl titled *Mary* . Sadly, the only copy was destroyed

in a fire. Many have tried to reproduce it, but with little success."

"Well, go on and enter it," Zoro muttered. Robin carefully typed in the name and there was a click. Luffy threw open the door.

Inside, a man with large forearms was dancing with his back to them while muttering a rhythm to himself. On the left wall sat a skeleton, attentively reading a book. On either side of the back wall were short bookshelves, and in the middle hung an abstract painting. There was a small table and vase to the right of the painting, in which rested a light blue rose and a black rose.

"Hey!" Luffy exclaimed. "Franky! Brook!"

Franky turned and Brook looked up.

"Yo!" Franky exclaimed. "Hey, glad you guys are all right!"

"Do any of you have any clue what's going on?" Brook asked, putting his book back on the shelf.

"Kinda," Zoro said. "I bet I can guess what happened to you guys. You were looking at an exhibit, and suddenly all the other patrons were gone. After exploring for a bit, you found some stairs and ended up in this room."

"Yeah, pretty much," Franky admitted as the group gathered in the middle to sit in a circle. "Same with all of you?"

"Yeah," Luffy said cheerfully. "Me and Zoro came here together, and Nami and Usopp."

"I ended up alone," Sanji muttered.

"Chopper and I found ourselves in that situation," Robin said.

"How odd," Brook remarked. "Say, why do you all have roses?"

"Weird," Franky muttered, twirling his light blue rose between his fingers after they'd finished explaining. "Living paintings and roses of life . . . I guess skeleton here and I are lucky that this one isn't doing anything." He glanced back at the apparently benign abstract work.

"I wonder how this works for *me* ," Brook said curiously, studying his black rose. "After all, I have no blood to lose and no nerves to feel pain!"

"If you really want to find out, you could take off a petal," Robin suggested lightly. "Though I wouldn't recommend it."

Brook chuckled. "I'll make a sacrifice for the experiment." He plucked off a petal from the base and yelped in pain and surprise as his little finger fell off his hand.

"Aah!" Nami shrieked.

Brook carefully picked up his finger and reattached it. "I shall have to be more careful," he said in surprise. "That was unexpected!"

"You're telling me!" Usopp cried. "Geez, what if your *head* falls off!?"

Brook chuckled. "I'm sure we'll find some way to reattach it! By the way, Robin- *san* , may I see your—?"

Nami punched him.

"By the way, sis, Bro Sanji," Franky said, "how come your clothes are all bloody? What the hell happened?"

"Both are my fault," Sanji muttered. "I was careless."

"It's *fine* ," Nami said firmly. Sanji barely looked at her, instead getting up to examine the painting on the wall.

"I need a smoke," he muttered, taking out a cigarette and his lighter.

The second he started clicking the lighter, the lights went out in the room.

"AAH!"

"Whoa! Mystery lights!"

"Is everyone still here!?"

"I hope nothing comes to steal us away."

"ROBIN, NOW IS NOT THE TIME!"

"I *hate* this fucking place!"

"I can't see a thing—though I had no eyes to see with in the first place!"

"Hey, this is *so* not super!"

"Gimme a sec . . ."

Just as Sanji managed to click on his lighter, the lights in the room flew back on. It was exactly the same as when they went out—other than the writing all over the ceiling and walls, apparently in crayon, reading *HELP STOP DON'T KILL ME DON'T PLEASE STOP NO IT HURTS* and the large mannequin heads next to the bookshelves.

But, well, other than those things, the room was exactly the same.

Sanji laughed shakily. "This can't be good for my mental health . . ."

"Oh, thank god, we're all here," Nami said in relief.

"Chopper, get off," Zoro snapped, pulling the little reindeer off his head.

"Art gallery scary. Art gallery scary," Usopp muttered to himself.

Robin looked around at the writing. "I wonder who wrote this . . . ?"

"Does that *matter* ?" Zoro demanded, finally succeeding in pulling Chopper off.

"It's just . . ." Robin frowned. "What if we're not the first ones to come to this cursed place? This writing could have been left by someone else who was unfortunate enough to be trapped here . . . though as for what happened to him . . ."

"Oh, good, something else to worry about," Sanji sighed. "Let's get going."

The group left the room. As they shut the door behind them, red writing on the wall to the left caught their eye.

A notice to all visitors: There is a strict ban on fire-starting implements in the gallery. We request that the use of any matches, lighters, or the like. Should the use of such implements be reported to the staff,

The message was cut off there by a large burn mark.

"Well, I never really cared about rules anyway," Sanji muttered. "Can't even have a smoke . . ."

"Sanji- *kun* , are you *sure* you're not hurt?" Nami demanded. "Your rose is more withered than before."

"Hm?" Sanji took his rose out and examined it.

"Here," Nami said, pointing to the area of the blue petals from about a centimeter from the center. "It's spread."

Sanji frowned. "It really looks fine to me. You're probably just imagining it. I'm fine."

"Well, I see it too," Luffy said.

"And I," Robin added, leaning over to look.

Sanji rolled his eyes. "I dunno what kind of joke you all are playing. I'm *fine* and so is my rose." He tucked it back into his pocket. "Come on. Maybe we missed something back here."

The group moved on back the way they came. Turning right, they found a doorway in the left wall which certainly wasn't there before.

"Well, that works," Robin said pleasantly. They strode through the doorway into the violet hall beyond.

Separation

The violet hallway soon forced them to turn left. Up ahead was a passage to the left and a door straight ahead. They tried the door but found it to be locked.

They took the passage instead, passing a simple landscape painting on the right titled *Separation* . Straight to the right was another door, and this one proved to be unlocked. They entered the room.

Sanji screamed. The room had two short bookshelves, two long tables in front of the shelves, and two long tables on either side; straight ahead on the back wall was a large painting. Both side tables were lined with creepy dolls, with blue skin, red eyes, jagged stitched-up smiles, black yarn hair, and varyingly-colored dresses. From the ceiling hung several similar dolls with their necks torn open and stuffing spilling out, and the large painting on the back wall featured an enormous grinning doll with the title *Red Eyes* .

"Er . . . Sanji- *san* , are you alright?" Brook asked worriedly as Sanji turned away from the room to try and calm himself.

"He's afraid of dolls and mannequins," Usopp said quietly. "Personally, I'm about to join him. These things are creepy."

"I hate this place," Zoro muttered.

"Never going to an art gallery again," Sanji muttered to himself.

"I think they're rather cute," Robin said quietly.

"W—What about *this* is *cute* !?" Sanji demanded, turning to stare at Robin incredulously.

She smiled. "It's rather endearing how poorly they're put together. Like a small child created them . . . is this another work of Guertena's, I wonder?"

"I don't know and I don't care," Sanji snapped, turning away again.

Robin strode forward to examine the bookshelves while Chopper and Usopp tried to calm Sanji down. As she turned back, one of the dolls on the ceiling fell from its noose and landed with a *thump* . Something clattered out of its broken neck.

"I don't want to know what that sound was, so don't tell me," Sanji said without looking up.

"Robin's got the key," Nami said reassuringly. "It's probably to that other door. We're gonna leave this room."

Sanji looked up at her and he seemed to calm down. He managed a smile. "Good . . . that's good. Let's go."

Luffy immediately grabbed the key and ran out. Zoro ran after him and managed to stop him before he turned the corner.

"We need to stick together," he said warningly. "Who knows what kind of other shit could happen if we split up?"

Luffy pouted. "Zoro's a meanie."

"He's also right," Franky pointed out.

The group turned the corner, but stopped when they heard a sound.

They turned. Something in the painting *Separation* was moving.

"What's that?" Chopper asked, standing on his toes to see.

The ground below them started shaking as the thing moved even closer and revealed itself to be a large, ugly flower. As it sprouted out of the canvas, the tips of some green things broke through the floor.

"Crap!" Zoro exclaimed. "Get away from it!"

"Nami- *san* , watch out!" Sanji cried.

"Chopper!" Usopp exclaimed.

"Hey, Luffy, I said move!" Zoro yelled.

They all managed to get away from the painting as the floor where they had been standing moments before suddenly cracked—green, thorny vines broke through, completely blocking off the passage and stretching all the way to the ceiling.

"That was close," Sanji muttered.

He, Nami, Usopp, and Chopper had ended up on the side of the passage which led to the room full of creepy dolls. The rest—Luffy, Zoro, Robin, Franky, and Brook—were on the side they had originally come from.

Zoro grabbed the vines and tried to force them apart to no avail. "These are made of stone!"

"Shit, that's right, you guys lost your strength," Franky muttered. He reached into his Speedo and pulled out two wrenches, handing one to Brook. "Skeleton, help me out here."

They both started hitting the stone vines, but they couldn't even make a crack.

"If you don't mind, Franky- *san* ," Brook said, "I'll keep this wrench just in case."

"Sure, whatever," Franky said. Brook opened up his skull and stored the tool inside.

"What are we gonna do?" Usopp whimpered.

"We have the key to that room," Robin said. "We'll go check it out to see if there's anything we can find to break these vines. We'll return soon."

After some debate, they agreed to this plan. The group of five set off for the room.

Luffy inserted the key and threw open the door. Inside were several stacked boxes. Many appeared to be sealed shut, and just a few were open. On the opposite wall was a door.

They started examining the boxes. In one was a stack of drawing paper, which for some reason was wet. In another were dirty palette knives and paint—the red paint was missing. In the last one, several paintbrushes rested. Upon closer examination, it was found that the bristles were made with human hair.

"Let's go back to the others," Robin said. "There's nothing useful here."

They went back through the door and told the other four.

"But there's another door there," Luffy added. "So we can probably go through there and look."

"Alright, just come back soon," Nami said worriedly.

"Hey—" Sanji took out his lighter and tossed it between the vines; Franky caught it. "It's almost out of oil, but if anything chases you, just chuck that at it."

Franky stowed it in his Speedo. "Thanks."

Sanji made a face. "And don't ever give it back."

The group of five left for the room again and went through the door. They found themselves in a long, twisting hallway, which went right, right, left, left, left, and finally right through another door.

They found themselves in a long room, where the monochrome color scheme had switched to light brown. A wide chasm was in the middle, far too wide to leap across. On the wall above it, there was a long, sturdy-looking plank of wood resting on a shelf. Above that

hung a cord, with one end hooked under the plank and the other end travelling down into the chasm. Across the chasm there was a block shaped like a triangular prism.

"What are we supposed to do?" Zoro demanded. "There's no way we can leap across this thing, not with our strength gone."

Robin frowned. "We could use that plank of wood, but it seems that that is also out of reach."

Luffy sighed. "I could make a drawbridge if I could still stretch . . ."

Sanji and the others waited on the other side of the vines.

"Should we go back and check that room again while we wait?" Usopp asked.

"Yeah, we might've missed something," Chopper agreed.

Sanji pressed his lips together. "As much as I hate to go back there . . . someone has to protect Nami- *san* and you guys."

They entered the room again, Sanji determinedly looking anywhere but the dolls. He strode to the bookshelf on the right and bent to examine it.

"Hey . . ." he muttered. He threw his weight against it and shoved it aside, revealing a hole in the wall previously covered up.

"Alright, this way," he ordered. He bent down and army-crawled through—Usopp and Chopper went next, and Nami came last.

They came out in a room (still with the violet colors) with a door straight ahead of them (which unfortunately was locked). The right side of the far wall had three cords hanging down: the middle one went straight up into the wide hole in the ceiling, and the other two hung on either side of it, going into the ceiling. Light shone through

the hole. In the corner of the room, there was a hole sunk into the floor shaped like a triangular prism.

"The hell are these things?" Sanji muttered, gesturing to the cords.

Usopp curiously pulled the one farthest to the right. There was a sound and a large mannequin head crashed to the floor. Sanji screamed.

"E *nough* already!" he yelled.

"What was that?"

After Sanji caught his breath, he looked up with the others at the hole. A face appeared.

"Luffy?" Chopper exclaimed.

Luffy grinned. "Hi, guys! What're you doing down there?"

"What are *you* doing up *there* ?" Nami demanded. "Is everyone there with you?"

"Yes, we're all here," Robin called, her face appearing next to Luffy's. "How did you four get there? I thought there were no other exits?"

"We found a secret passage!" Chopper exclaimed. "And there's a door here, but it's locked."

"Is there a rope or something down there?" Zoro called, his face appearing on Luffy's other side. "Give it a pull!"

Usopp yanked on the middle cord. Above them there was a clatter.

"Super, we can cross now!" Franky exclaimed. The plank was laid carefully across and the group cautiously walked the length to the other side.

"There's a weird triangle thing up here," Luffy called down.

"Throw it down!" Nami yelled. "I think we need it!"

The block came whizzing down and crashed to the floor, making them jump. Usopp carefully lifted it and pushed it into the hole in the floor; there was a sound and the door in the room opened.

"We're gonna keep going!" Sanji called up. "There might be some stairs to where you guys are!"

"I hope we'll see you soon!" Robin called back. Each group went their separate ways.

Red Poison and Balls of Paint

Luffy's group went down the little hallway single-file. It made them turn right, then left, and led them into a large open area.

The brown color scheme was still there. To their left were a door and a cloud of ominous-looking red gas. To their right were another door and a painting titled *Fisherman* , featuring an empty cliff overlooking the sea below. Up ahead was a larger area.

"We can split up and explore," Zoro suggested, "as long as none of us go too far. If anyone sees stairs, give a shout."

The others agreed. Luffy and Robin went to check the door on the right while Franky, Zoro, and Brook went to the left.

Franky pulled open the door and peered inside. There were three mannequin heads, each on its own table—one was close to the door and two were in corners. As the three entered, they saw a painting on the wall titled *Lady without Her Umbrella* , featuring a silhouette of a woman standing in the wind.

"The hell are these mannequin things for, anyway?" Zoro muttered. "Shit-cook would *not* be happy to be up here . . ."

"Why'd this Guertena guy make these things?" Franky wondered aloud. "Don't they have bodies?"

THUD

Brook gave a shout of surprise. He had been trying to take one of the heads off, but it had proved too heavy for him and slipped from his grasp. It didn't break, oddly enough, but it had caused the floor to crack. Red gas seeped out from the cracks.

"What were you even trying to do?" Zoro snapped. "Oh, never mind. There's nothing in here."

They left and turned to check out the ominous-looking red gas in the small hallway.

Franky tried stepping through, but he stepped back almost immediately, coughing. A petal fell from his rose.

"That stuff's poison or something," he said once the coughing fit had ceased. "We *super* shouldn't go down there."

"Oh, great, another place we can't go," Zoro snapped, throwing his hands in the air. "Fan-fucking-tastic."

"Zoro- *san* , you seem tense," Brook said lightly. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a teabag. "Would you like some tea to calm you down?"

Zoro took the teabag grudgingly. "Thanks, but . . . you know we don't have water, much less hot water."

Brook chuckled. "Perhaps we could drink from a vase—? I'm joking, I'm joking!" he added hastily.

Zoro sighed and stowed away the teabag. "I'll have it later."

About the same time that the group of three were entering the room with the three mannequin heads, Luffy and Robin were heading to the right. Luffy tried the door, only to find it was locked.

" *Fisherman* . . . but there's no one there," Robin said bemusedly, studying the painting.

Luffy glanced over. "Oh, is that what it says? I thought it said fish-man. Like that stupid shark guy."

Robin raised her eyebrows. "You can't read?"

Luffy frowned. "I can read . . . ! Just not hard words."

Robin smiled and handed Luffy a small book. "Use this—it's a pocket dictionary. It'll tell you how to say the words and what they mean."

"Oh, thanks," Luffy said, grinning. He put it in his pocket and led Robin to another part.

Turning left from the locked door, they found another door on the right, directly after a large open area with a single vase and a painting called *Tattletale* , which held a single pair of cherry-red lips.

Luffy tried the door and found it to be unlocked. He bounced inside with Robin close behind.

"Huh!?" Luffy exclaimed in surprise. "There's no color!"

It was as if they had entered an old film. Everything in the room, including themselves, had become grayscale. There was a wide chasm in the middle of the room, far too wide to jump, and on the other side there was a key resting on a table with a large painting behind it.

"We'll come back here later," Robin suggested. "Who knows? By then some sort of bridge might have appeared and we'll be able to cross."

Luffy frowned.

"It makes just as much sense as anything else happening here," Robin pointed out.

They went back to where they had come from and met with the others.

"Anything?" Robin asked.

They shrugged. "Nothing worth knowing about," Franky said. "There's something behind that red gas, but the stuff's poisonous, so we can't go that way."

Luffy sighed. "That door's locked. There's a vase over there and a room without color."

"I wonder what the others are up to . . . ?" Brook said to himself.

Sanji pushed open the door with the other three close behind. They were in some kind of hallway. It went left shortly up ahead, and on the back wall was one of the creepy dolls sitting innocently. Something was scrawled above it.

"Oh, god," Sanji muttered, gritting his teeth. He reluctantly strode up to it and read the message.

Hi, Sanji! I like making new friends . . . won't you take me with you?

Sanji turned on his heel and walked away without a word. The others followed.

As he turned the corner again, he saw the doll again. It was the same one as before, and it had another message above it.

Hey, what's wrong? Why aren't you taking me?

"Fuck off," he spat, refusing to take it. Chopper looked like he wanted to take it, but Usopp shook his head warningly. Nami looked at Sanji worriedly.

As they turned the corner again (this hallway was rather long and twisting, it seemed), the creepy doll appeared yet again.

Do you hate me, Sanji?

Sanji rummaged in his coat, but remembering that he had given his lighter to Franky, settled on sticking an unlit cigarette in his mouth to bite down on.

The group continued on. Around the next corner, the doll waited.

Play with me! I've got lots of friends—I'm sure they'll be happy to meet you!

They moved on without a word.

Around the next corner was a door at last. But the doll rested in front of it as if to block their path. There was no message above it this time.

"Just how long is it going to follow me . . . ?" Sanji muttered angrily. "I'm *sick* of this! I'm not going to be your friend, asshole! Out of my *way* !"

He kicked the doll into the wall, spitting his cigarette into its face. As the doll hit the wall, a red splatter of what seemed to be paint covered the area.

"Stupid thing," Sanji muttered. He opened the door and strode inside, the others following nervously.

There was a hall to their right and a door some ways up ahead. Outside of the door rested a single doll head. As they approached it, they noticed that same red fluid leaking from the base and a message on the wall above it:

It's all your fault my head got plucked off!

Sanji resolutely ignored it and went inside the door. They found seven skinny pedestals inside and a note on the back wall.

Usopp went forward and read it. "'Collect the seven balls of paint . . . then the room will be colored and your bridge will be made.'"

"Balls of paint?" Chopper said curiously.

"Just another shitty task we have to do," Sanji snapped.

"Sanji- *kun* , calm down," Nami said softly.

Sanji looked at her and his expression softened slightly. "Sorry, Nami- *san* ."

They left the room and found that the doll head had vanished. Straight up ahead, outside of the door they'd come through, was something yellow.

"The heck is this?" Usopp muttered as they approached it. He picked it up.

"Oh, weird," he said. "It's really soft . . . but it feels really fragile . . . is *this* a ball of paint?"

As he held it, the thing vanished.

"Wah!" he said in surprise. "So . . . we have to collect six more?"

"Seems like it," Nami said. "Let's all split up. Usopp, you and I will go this way—" she pointed to the hall they'd seen to the right when they'd first entered. "—Sanji- *kun* , Chopper, you two go the other way."

"Alright," Sanji muttered. "C'mon."

He turned to go. Before Chopper could follow him, Nami bent down and whispered something in his ear. The reindeer's expression turned serious and he nodded before running after Sanji.

"C'mon, Usopp," Nami said firmly. "Lead the way."

Robin Explains and Dolls Are Creepy

The group upstairs sat around, having concluded that there wasn't anything worth checking out at the moment.

A few minutes later, Zoro glanced over. "Hey, Robin, what're you writing?"

Robin had her notebook open and was writing with the Tabasco sauce Usopp had lent her earlier. She glanced up when Zoro spoke.

"Oh, just figuring out some things," she said.

"Like a way out?" Franky asked hopefully.

"A way to make food from nothing?" Luffy asked.

"Neither of those," Robin replied, "but you were on the right track, Franky."

"Out with it, then," Franky said.

"I'm piecing together some observations," Robin explained. "First off, there was that diary I found earlier—Franky, Brook, you two weren't there at the time."

They listened.

"The diary said something like, 'I will impart my spirit into my creations,'" Robin continued. "This was Weiss Guertena's diary, as far as I could tell." She flipped to a previous page. "Comparing the handwriting in the diary to his signatures on earlier pieces . . . Guertena was nearing the end of his life when he wrote in this diary."

"So Guertena- *san* found a way to leave behind a piece of himself—or several pieces," Brook mused aloud. "That would explain why the artworks are coming alive. But why are they chasing *us* ?"

"Because we're alive?" Zoro suggested, betraying that he had actually been listening to the conversation.

"That's what I thought, at first," Robin said. "But . . ." she glanced at Brook. "Anyway, it seems that these creations are coming after us—no, how they *know* to come after us, even without heads or bodies—is because they can sense our souls."

"Come to think of it . . ." Luffy looked up in thought. "Those lips on the wall couldn't see us, right?"

"Right," Zoro agreed. "So Robin's right—it sensed us 'cause we don't have a part of Guertena in us. Right?"

Robin nodded.

"But again, why are they chasing us and trying to kill us?" Franky demanded. "I mean, skeleton and I haven't seen much of it, but from what you guys are saying, you've been through hell with this art."

"Every exhibit here is made by Weiss Guertena," Robin began, "and it seems that every one of them, even if they don't move, contain some part of his soul. I find it interesting that some of these works—like the Ladies and the headless statues—pursue us relentlessly, yet other parts of this gallery try to help us. Luffy, Zoro, you two mentioned a pair of lips earlier, which let you all through once you gave it food. Not to mention THE LIARS' ROOM you talked about: One of the paintings was willing to help you out."

"Go on," Zoro said, finally interested in the conversation.

"We all have different parts of us," Robin continued. "Let's say we're given a puzzle to finish. One part of us may want to complete the puzzle, another may want to abandon the effort, and yet another may want to try the puzzle, but give up if it's too hard. Weiss Guertena was a man no different than the rest of us, and his soul represents that. This is why some of the paintings help and some hinder."

"Huh," Franky said. "That makes sense . . ."

"We're in Guertena's world," Robin explained, sweeping her arm across in a dramatic display. "Guertena was an artist. Some part of him wanted to show us his world and draw us into it, though perhaps he didn't mean *that* part quite so literally. I'm not sure what will happen if one of us were to lose all our petals, but it seems we would be trapped in Guertena's world forever. The attacking artwork wants to make us a part of this world, and the ones which help want to give us a chance to escape if we so desire. Remember how we all got to this place? We went down a flight of stairs, and we've been going down ever since. We're going deeper into Guertena's world, and I'm not sure how easy it will be to get out."

The others applauded.

"I think I get it," Luffy said cheerfully. "So Guacamole wants us to stay but he likes us so he's giving us a chance to get out!"

Robin smiled. "Essentially, yes."

"Guertena, not Guacamole," Franky muttered.

Luffy shrugged. "I like guacamole."

"Speaking of Guertena- *san* ," Brook said, "the circumstances surrounding his death are rather mysterious. His final work, *Mary* , was found burned in his home—though thankfully this was after pictures had been taken and copies had been made for museums!"

"His death?" Zoro prompted.

"Ah, yes—well, *Mary* was the only thing in the house which was burned. There were no traces of a fire starting, nor anything else being affected by the flames . . ." Brook sighed. "And somehow, Guertena- *san* 's body was never recovered."

"So how do they know he died in the first place?" Franky asked reasonably.

"It was all in the newspapers 60 years ago," Brook informed him. "A nosy neighbor of his said she had seen him going into his home. She had become concerned when he didn't emerge a day later and called the Marines to investigate. They found the burned painting, but no sign of Guertena." Brook chuckled. "And anyway, he was getting on in years at that time! To be alive today, he would have to have eaten a Devil Fruit like mine!"

Robin took note of this. "Interesting . . . thank you, Brook."

"Anytime," Brook replied. "Say, Robin- *san* , may I see your panties?"

"Hey, what's that?" Luffy asked, pointing to the painting *Fisherman* . There was now a figure standing on the cliff. A fishing line was dangling below, and something red was hanging on the end.

"What's up?" Usopp asked Nami once they were out of earshot of Sanji and Chopper.

Nami didn't say anything for a moment. "I'm . . . worried about Sanji- *kun* ."

"He's been acting weird," Usopp agreed as they approached a painting called *Fishing Hook* , which featured a hook that seemed to be actually coming out of the painting.

"This place seems to be affecting him badly," Nami continued. "I didn't mention it because he's been denying it, but his rose . . . right now about half of it is withered."

"Ow!"

Nami looked up sharply to see Usopp sucking on his finger. "What happened?" she asked.

"I wanted to see if that thing was real, and it got my finger," Usopp mumbled, gesturing to the fishing hook.

Nami sighed and took out a white handkerchief. It had a few spots of blood in one corner from her earlier near-death experience. "Here, clean it up with this. And don't give it back until you wash it. I'll charge you later."

"Thanks, I think," Usopp muttered, taking the handkerchief. "So, Sanji . . . ?"

"Right. I asked Chopper to keep an eye on him," Nami explained. "If something happens . . ."

"Good thinking," Usopp said. "Now let's get searching—Sanji should be fine with Chopper."

Nami nodded, though she still seemed worried. The two turned and went to examine the paintings on the other side of the wall behind them.

One of them was a painting titled *Worry* , showing a quarter of a face with a large eye. The background was blue. The one on the right was a painting called *Juggling* , featuring a man on a unicycle juggling several colored balls.

"Hey," Nami said, examining the painting of the juggler, where the colored balls appeared to be actually moving within the canvas. "One of them . . ."

She reached her hand out to the painting and swiftly seized something. Opening her palm, she was met with a blue ball of paint, which vanished shortly after.

"Nice!" Usopp exclaimed. He held out his hand for a high-five, but Nami ignored him and turned around to face the door behind them.

"So what's in here?" she muttered. "Usopp, go take a look."

Usopp dropped his hand in disappointment. "Fine," he muttered. "But if something comes alive, I'm not going back in."

He walked in and was met with a strange red gas filling the entire room. It seemed to be spewing from small holes in the ground.

"The hell—?" he coughed. "Ugh! I can't stay long . . ."

He took a step and coughed again. His rose lost a petal.

He quickly looked around. Directly in front of him was a gray vase. An umbrella (it was impossible to tell what color it was in all the red gas) leaned against the door wall to his left, and a ball of paint was resting on the ground near the vase.

"Okay," he mumbled. "Fix up my rose, then grab the stuff and get out . . ."

He continued forward to the vase. By the time he reached it, he was having trouble walking. Blood dripped down his hands and his rose had lost almost half its petals.

He stuck his yellow rose into the vase, but to his horror nothing happened. He peered inside and found it was empty.

Usopp swore loudly, coughed, and turned around. He ended up crawling to the door and knocking on it to alert Nami.

The door swung open. Usopp heard Nami gasp and felt her dragging him out and shutting the door. As he lay on the ground, trying to push himself up into a sitting position, she took his rose and went off. Soon his wounds closed and he became stronger.

Nami returned with his rose and gave it back to him. It was healthy once more.

"Thanks," he said.

"There was one of those endless vases," she explained. "What the hell happened?"

Usopp explained about the gas and the empty vase.

"I see . . ."

"I'm going back in," Usopp said determinedly. "Nami, can you hold my rose for a minute? I'm gonna grab that umbrella—we might need it for something."

"Huh?" Nami said in surprise as he handed her his rose. "What about the ball of paint?"

"We'll get that later," Usopp said determinedly. Before Nami could protest any more, he turned and entered the room again. A few petals fell off as Nami lightly held the yellow rose. Usopp returned very quickly, coughing and holding up the red umbrella proudly.

Nami rolled her eyes and went to heal his rose again. Once she was finished and had returned, Usopp held out his hand for a high-five again. This time she reciprocated.

"So what do we do with this?" Nami asked, pointing to the umbrella.

Usopp opened it up, twirled it, and closed it again. "I dunno."

Nami narrowed her eyes at the handle, which ended in a hook shape. Without another word she took the umbrella and went around the corner.

When Usopp followed, he found her placing the umbrella on the end of the fishing hook from the painting.

"What are you—?" he began, but his question was answered when the fishing hook suddenly retracted into the painting as if it were being reeled in. Nami turned around and smiled.

"I just had a hunch," she said. "Let's meet up with Sanji- *kun* and Chopper."

Sanji and Chopper had gone into a little room full of books and were examining the shelves.

"Hey, I found one!" Chopper exclaimed. He held up a green ball of paint, which had fallen off of a shelf he'd been examining. It vanished just as Sanji looked at it.

"So?" Sanji snapped. "It's just one. We need five more, don't we? Keep looking."

Chopper's ears drooped. "Sanji . . ."

Sanji set down the book he'd been reading and sat against the wall. "Sorry."

Chopper trotted over to him. "Is everything okay?"

Sanji kept his head down. "I've been feeling . . . off . . . ever since we came here. I dunno . . ." he sighed. "I was rude to Nami- *san* and Robin- *chan* earlier, wasn't I . . . ?"

Chopper kept silent. This seemed to confirm Sanji's fears.

"You all say my rose is withered, but it looks perfectly healthy," Sanji continued. "Who's hallucinating, you guys . . . or me?

"Chopper . . . I feel like I'm going crazy," Sanji muttered. "But you don't have any medicine for that, do you?"

Chopper hugged Sanji around the middle.

"What's the matter?" Sanji muttered.

Chopper looked up at him. "Sanji . . . hang in there!"

He said it with such innocent determination that Sanji had to laugh. "Thanks, Chopper." He stood. "Let's check out the rest of this place. Then we'll meet up with Nami and Usopp."

"What's this red thing?" Zoro said. He and the others were staring at the painting of the fisherman. Something was at the end of his line.

"I wonder . . ." Robin murmured. She reached a hand out and closed her fist around something. When she withdrew her hand, she was holding a red umbrella, which was gone from the painting.

"Neat!" Luffy exclaimed. "Mystery umbrella!"

"Umbrella . . . ?" Franky muttered. "Hey—!"

He quickly took the umbrella from Robin and went back into the room with the mannequin heads. The others followed and found him in front of the painting titled *Lady without Her Umbrella* . As they watched, he held out the umbrella to the painting. It vanished from his hands; the lady in the painting opened the umbrella and held it over her head as it began to rain, both in the painting and in the room.

"What the hell did you do!?" Zoro exclaimed, staring up at the ceiling, where thick clouds had formed.

Franky shrugged. "I dunno!"

They went out of the room, shutting the door behind them.

"I just thought," Franky explained, "—I mean, when I saw the umbrella—I thought, 'Hey, maybe that chick in the painting wants it.'"

"That settles it," Zoro said. "We *definitely* can't stay here for too long. Otherwise we'll start thinking like that all the time."

Robin laughed behind her hand.

"And that room is basically off-limits," Usopp concluded. "But at least we all found three balls!"

"Yeah, and three more to go," Sanji muttered.

"I was thinking—I can go check out that room again," Usopp suggested.

Sanji scowled. "Don't be stupid. You'd be sacrificing your petals."

"I'll be fine!" Usopp insisted. "I'll run in, grab the ball, and run out. Don't worry!"

"Alright, get it over with then," Sanji snapped. Nami looked at him worriedly. He noticed and looked down.

Usopp opened the door and went straight for the ball of paint, coughing. As he grabbed it, it vanished and he glanced up at the vase. To his surprise, he saw water dripping down from some source in the ceiling, straight into the vase.

"Ah," he muttered. Crawling towards the vase, he placed his rose inside and it bloomed. He glanced around and saw a long cord hanging from the ceiling. He ran towards it, coughing, and pulled it.

The gas dissipated. Soon the room was clear and Usopp could breathe properly. The water was still dripping from the ceiling, so he went to place his rose inside. After it was healthy once more, he went back out and explained what had happened.

"Okay, good," Sanji said. "That's good. Just two more."

The group went around the corner to find the head of the doll Sanji had kicked earlier lying on the ground near a door. A message was scrawled above it.

I found something! It's all mine—you can't have it!

Sanji made a face. Chopper examined the head, reached into the stuffing (Sanji closed his eyes), and pulled out a red ball of paint, which quickly vanished.

The doll head cackled and everyone jumped. It rolled itself up to the door—the door opened up, the doll head rolled inside, and the door shut again.

They approached the door cautiously. The knob was cold. When they opened it, Sanji gasped.

Inside were dolls. Dolls lying all around the floor, large dolls sitting on shelves, dolls hanging from the ceiling—a blank painting with no title hung on the opposite wall. Directly ahead was a white ball of paint.

Sanji gritted his teeth. "I can do this . . ." he muttered. "You all stay back in case something happens."

He strode forward, not looking at the dolls, and picked up the white ball of paint. It vanished in his palm.

"Seven," he muttered. But just as he turned around, the door slammed shut.

There was banging and rattling from the other side. "Sanji- *kun* !?" Nami yelled. "What's going on?"

"Hell if I know!" Sanji yelled. "It's locked, dammit!"

"Sanji, are you gonna be okay!?" Usopp cried.

"Listen," Sanji said. "You guys get out of here. If this shitty puzzle is anything like what we've been through so far, that door by the fishing hook painting will be unlocked. Go on ahead and don't worry about me—I promise I'll catch up!"

"But Sanji- *kun* —"

"Nami, shut up!" Sanji yelled. "I'll find another way out—I'm sorry! Just go!"

"Come on," Usopp said, grabbing Nami's wrist and scooping up Chopper. "It's Sanji we're talking about. He'll find the key or something."

Nami nodded and Chopper looked close to tears. As they reached the door, they found it was indeed ajar.

Sanji stared at the door, listening to the fading sound of his friends' footsteps. "Did I really tell her to shut up . . . ?" he mumbled. "What kind of moron does that? I gotta apologize later."

Something appeared on the door and he jumped back. Looking closer, he saw it was a message.

Let's have a treasure hunt! Can you guess who has the key, Sanji?

"What the . . . ?" he muttered. He turned around and the room appeared to tremble, the air going ten degrees colder, the lights dimming.

"Shit," he hissed. "This is bad . . . where the hell is the key!?"

Something slowly came up from the bottom of that previously blank painting—a blue hand. Sanji reached down with shaking hands and tore open a doll.

Nothing.

He tried another one with an orange dress. Blue paint spilled out like blood.

"Oh, god," he muttered, feeling nauseous.

The thing in the painting was coming up. The top of its head was visible.

Sanji ripped the head off of another doll. Some kind of centipede wriggled out and crawled up his arm, going into his skin. He screamed and ripped it out, though oddly enough he felt no pain, only the wriggling feeling of the bug's legs and terrible disgust.

The large doll in the painting (and now it was clear it was a doll) was peering through the frame. Its hands were coming out to the sides.

Sanji ripped open yet another doll. Nothing. Another one yielded nothing again, and yet another held only a large ball of black hair. Sanji threw down the thing in disgust.

The large doll was halfway out of the canvas.

Sanji turned around and—

Reunion

Happy belated Thanksgiving to my American readers! Here's hoping y'all were able to tolerate your relatives and enjoy some delicious pie!

"Hm . . ." Luffy stared thoughtfully at the small passageway. "Wasn't there some red gas there before?"

The others looked around.

"Oh, it's gone," Franky said in surprise. "I guess we can go through now."

They went in and around the corner to a small room with a painting hung on a wall, featuring a child sleeping on a moon bed with a sword above the head. The title was *Aspiration* .

There was a door to their left. They tried it, but it was locked.

"Okay, and we're back to square one," Zoro sighed.

They left and immediately froze when they heard banging. It seemed to be coming from the other side of the locked door next to *Fisherman* .

Luffy ran up to the door and banged on it right back. The banging on the other side abruptly stopped and someone said, "Hey, guys! Is that you?"

"Usopp?" Luffy exclaimed. "Yeah, we're all up here! How'd you get over there?"

"It's a long story," Nami said.

"Can you unlock the door?" Chopper asked. "We can't do it from here."

Zoro rattled the doorknob. "Nope, still locked."

"Isn't there a key?" Nami demanded.

Robin explained about the colorless room.

"A room without color . . . ? Hey!"

"Oh yeah, those balls—the sign said, the room will be—" Usopp paused. "Guys, go check that room again! It probably changed!"

Everyone looked at each other, shrugged, and went back to the grayscale area. But when they entered, they found, to their surprise, that everything was colored now. The painting on the far wall turned out to be a rainbow band, and a bridge had appeared, allowing them to cross the chasm and get the key.

Robin smiled. "What did I tell you?"

Back at the door, they unlocked it with the small brown key. It swung open to reveal Nami, Usopp, and Chopper.

After exclamations of delight and reunion hugs (mostly from Luffy and Chopper), the three explained what had happened downstairs while the others filled them in on their end.

"Oh!" Chopper exclaimed after they'd explained about the locked door. He pulled out a small brown key. "I found this downstairs on a bookshelf—maybe it goes to that door?"

They went back to the door and the key fit. A set of stairs went down into near-total darkness.

They cheered, but soon their voices died down.

"So . . ." Luffy said. "Where's Sanji?"

Nami, Usopp, and Chopper looked down.

"What?" Zoro demanded. "Don't tell me—"

"No, he's fine," Usopp said. "I-I think . . ."

Nami explained about the doll room.

Franky raised an eyebrow. "Alright, so why hasn't he come back?"

". . . We . . . we should go check on him," Chopper said worriedly.

The group went back through the door and down the stairs to the purple-colored area. The three led the five to the door of the doll room. To their surprise, it was ajar and they could hear someone saying something inside.

"Why hasn't he . . ." Usopp trailed off.

Luffy marched up to the door and pushed it open. But when he looked inside, he didn't say a word and his face registered shock.

The others followed him and looked.

Sanji was sitting on the floor with his legs pulled up to his chest. Several creepy dolls were scattered around the room, and one was sitting across from Sanji, facing him. He seemed to be talking to it with a happy smile and glassy eyes.

". . . Really!" he exclaimed, not noticing the Strawhats by the door. "I've never heard that before!"

He laughed. It wasn't his usual laugh, but instead light and cheerful.

"No, I promise I won't tell anyone," he swore, apparently under the impression that the doll was speaking to him. "Your secret's safe with me!"

Another pause, as if to give his imaginary partner time to speak.

"What!?" he exclaimed. "That's horrible! Who would do that to a lady? Why, I'd give them a good talking-to if I ever saw that happening!"

Pause.

"Yeah, I know what you mean," he continued. "Forgetting all the bad things is the best way to go! Isn't that right? Ahaha!"

"Why—what—" Usopp whispered.

"That . . . *is* Sanji, isn't it?" Robin asked. "If any of you saw a painting of him—"

"W-We didn't," Chopper said quietly, staring at Sanji. "This is him, but . . ."

"Something's wrong," Franky said, stating the obvious. "What the hell happened?"

"Didn't you three say this room was filled with those dolls before?" Brook asked. "Perhaps . . . the dolls did something, and Sanji- *san* 's mind . . ."

"His rose," Luffy said, pointing to it resting in Sanji's breast pocket. Except for the parts nearest the base, the petals were completely withered.

"He was finally pushed over the edge," Zoro muttered. "Why didn't we notice? He'd been acting weird, hadn't he?"

"Nami- *san* ?" Brook asked. Nami hadn't said a word the whole time. Her hands were clenched into fists as she stared at Sanji silently.

Without a word Nami slowly walked to Sanji as he continued rambling to the doll. She knelt in front of him and stared into his eyes.

"Sanji- *kun* ," she said softly.

Sanji finally seemed to see her. "Oh, hello!" he said happily. "Is something wrong? If you need a friend, you can talk to me! My friends are all here, too! Why don't I introduce you?"

"Sanji- *kun* ," she repeated, slightly louder.

"We're all happy to keep you company until—"

Nami raised her hand and slapped Sanji across the face.

Sanji finally stopped talking and didn't move.

"Nami!" Chopper exclaimed indignantly.

"No, hold on, this is interesting," Zoro said.

"You IDIOT!" Nami yelled, slapping Sanji again. "You said you'd be FINE! This doesn't look like FINE to me!" She slapped him again. "You SAID you'd find another way out! *You said you'd catch up to us!"* She slapped him again. "If you don't get up RIGHT NOW then *so help me god* I will *keep hitting you until you do!"*

"Nami- *swan* . . . ?"

She slapped him again. "Come back to us . . ." she whispered.

"Nami- *swan* !"

Nami looked up and stared at Sanji. His eyes were full of life again, he had his usual lovesick grin on his reddened face, and he was standing.

"Ah, Nami- *swan* 's slaps feel like a gentle hail from the heavens!" Sanji cried, spinning around in happiness. Then he stopped, blinked, and looked around. "Wait . . . Nami- *swan* ? Guys? Where are we? What's going—uh!"

Nami had stood and grabbed Sanji around the middle in a tight hug. From her shaking shoulders, it was obvious she was crying.

"Don't make us worry, you jackass," she mumbled.

Sanji looked at her and hugged her back. "Nami- *swan* , don't cry . . . I don't know what happened, but if I made you worry, I'm sorry."

"SANJI!"

Sanji looked over and was tackle-hugged by Usopp. "You jerk!" Usopp cried.

Chopper hugged Sanji's legs. "I wasn't worried about you, bastard!"

Luffy grinned and ran over to hug Sanji, toppling the lot of them to the floor. "Sanji, you're back to normal!"

"You made us worry, you jerk!" Franky cried, joining the hug pile. "I'm not crying, shut up!"

"I'm *not* joining them," Zoro muttered, standing off to the side with Robin and Brook. "But, well . . . if he hadn't gone back to normal, we wouldn't be able to spar again."

Robin smiled as Brook chuckled.

Eventually Sanji shoved everyone off of him. His rose was beginning to look healthy again.

They left the room, promising to never go back in. Sanji looked around.

"Right, so . . ." he said. "What happened?"

"You don't—?" Nami said. "How much do you remember?"

Sanji scratched his head in frustration. "Let's see . . . we got separated back there . . . Nami- *swan* , Usopp, Chopper, and I went back into that room . . . and . . ." he groaned. "Damn, my head hurts . . . I can't remember how we got here . . ."

Chopper clapped his hooves together (as oppose to snapping fingers) and reached under his hat to pull out a little bottle. "Sanji, here—" he handed it to him. "You can keep this for now—it's headache medicine."

"Thanks," Sanji said. He opened the bottle, shook out a small pill, and swallowed. "Let's hope it works . . ."

He placed the bottle in his breast pocket and narrowed his eyes. He took out his rose, which still had a few withered bits, but was looking mostly healthy. "Since when was this . . . ?"

"What?" Zoro asked.

"These bits are drying up," Sanji pointed out.

The others said nothing. Sanji looked around confusedly, shrugged, and stowed the rose back in his pocket.

"So, what happened?" he asked. "I find myself in that room filled with creepy dolls and everyone's hugging me all of a sudden—what happened?"

"Don't worry about it," Usopp said soothingly, patting Sanji on the back. "You don't need to remember. Take your time."

Sanji scowled. "I'm not a kid—"

"Anyway," Robin said quickly, "we found some stairs to another place. Shall we go?"

"I'll go *anywhere* you ask me to, Robin- *chwan* !" Sanji exclaimed, completely distracted from his previous question.

Finally back together, the Strawhats went upstairs and back to the staircase, descending into the darkness.

Mistake, Flowers, and a Spell

Guys . . . remember the ending Forgotten Portrait? Remember how there's a "fake Garry" who tries to lead you away? I . . . don't think that was a fake Garry. Since we see his portrait at the end, wouldn't that have been the REAL Garry who was tempting you, since he was already a painting by then and so had the same intentions as the colored ladies and headless statues?

Besides, we do see a fake Mother in other endings, but we'd seen the painting of her and Father earlier in the game, so she came from there. Meanwhile, we'd never seen any kind of painting of Garry until the very ending of Forgotten Portrait.

The light became dimmer and dimmer as they went down. Soon they were moving slowly, gingerly testing for steps and trying not to trip on anything or anyone.

They eventually got to the bottom and came out in a small room. To their right was a gray vase with a window behind it, and to their left up ahead was a simple door. The whole room was dimly lit and seemed to be dark gray.

The vase held no water. They left the small room wordlessly.

Outside was a larger room. Turning to the right, they turned right again into a quick dead-end. On the wall hung the *Lady in Blue* .

"This place feels familiar," Sanji muttered, staring at the painting. "But it's different from before . . ."

Usopp and Chopper moved in front of Sanji as if to protect him.

"D-Don't worry," Usopp said reassuringly. "I'm sure she won't attack."

"We've got your back!" Chopper exclaimed.

Sanji raised an eyebrow. "What are you two doing?"

"Protecting you," Usopp said matter-of-factly. Without further explanation, the group went back to the other way, noticing that the window showing the small room was now covered in some thick red liquid.

They quickly came upon another dark gray door and silently entered.

The room was suddenly a muted orange color. Two murals hung on the opposite wall, entitled *Déjà Vu* and *Concealed Secret* , which respectively showed a colorful desert landscape and a hand clutching a curtain.

They entered another orange door and came out in an odd room. Straight up ahead was a door to the right; farther up, the path made a 90 degree turn to the left. Directly to their left was a small hall with two doors on its right and an unusual metal sculpture of some kind in the middle. At its end, the path went right.

"Should we split up?" Sanji suggested.

The others quickly shook their heads and said in unison, "No way."

"Why?" Sanji demanded. "Wouldn't it be faster that way?"

"Actually, we *could* . . ." Nami said slowly. "But only if *no one* goes off by themselves." She looked at Sanji. "Everyone needs to have at least one other with them at all times."

"Yeah, that sounds good," Usopp agreed, also glancing at Sanji, who raised an eyebrow.

Luffy frowned. " *That* happened 'cause Sanji was alone . . . so I guess that's okay!"

"What are you—" Sanji began, but was cut off.

"So let's split up," Zoro said impatiently.

"Okay," Luffy said cheerfully. "Me, Zoro, Usopp, Nami, and Brook'll go this way—" he pointed straight up ahead— "and Sanji, Franky, Chopper, and Robin'll go that way!" he pointed to the other direction.

"Aye-aye," the others said dutifully.

The group of four went left and into the first door. Inside were several messily-placed cardboard boxes, a narrow path leading straight ahead, and a painting hung on a wall titled *Mistake* . There were strange whizzing sounds coming from the path ahead.

Robin turned and examined *Mistake* . It featured a poorly-drawn man in a gray outfit with his face scratched out by a smear of black paint.

"Y'know," Sanji said thoughtfully, "I bet only a real artist could get away with making a mistake, sticking it in a frame, and calling it art."

"That depends on how you define 'art,'" Robin said absently, writing something in her notebook. "Almost anything could be art if you think about it."

"Like Robin- *chwan* !" Sanji exclaimed with hearts in his eyes.

"Yes, a person could be considered something like a work of art," Robin agreed. "But that sounds a bit objectifying, doesn't it?"

Sanji's desperate apology was cut off by Franky saying, "Yeah, even a ship could be called a work of art, right?"

"What about stuff you make?" Chopper suggested.

"Or fine cuisine," Sanji added, recovering from his earlier verbal stumble.

As they turned away from the painting, there was a *CRASH* from behind them. They jumped and whipped back around to see that

Mistake had come out of his painting and was slowly wandering around.

They froze, but the painting didn't seem to notice them. It tottered around in circles before bumping into a wall.

"Maybe it can't see us," Chopper whispered.

"Just what we need," Sanji muttered. "Another weird thing."

"Don't worry, Bro Sanji, we'll protect you," Franky said reassuringly. Sanji raised an eyebrow but said nothing.

"If we all keep our voices down, it shouldn't be able to hear us," Robin said softly.

The group moved quietly as one towards the narrow passage. As they did so, Sanji noticed that a little less than a quarter of the room was completely walled off, except for a single window. He peered inside the window and saw a small bookshelf, a medium-sized square painting of a gaping black hole hung near the ground, and a small orange key on the ground.

As he watched, Luffy's torso popped out of the painting, to his shock. Luffy spotted the key and grabbed it. He looked up, waved to Sanji, and crawled backwards back into the hole.

"Sanji, come on!" Chopper whispered. "What's wrong?"

"Um . . . nothing," Sanji said, throwing one last glance at the place where Luffy had vanished.

Franky elected to stay out of the narrow passage and keep Mistake distracted if necessary—it was possible they could be trapped by Mistake if they all went single-file into the passage.

Robin went first, followed by Sanji, and then Chopper. They turned left and quickly discovered the source of the whizzing—every few

seconds, an arrow would whizz through a skinny gap in the wall to their right, stick into the wall to their left, and disintegrate.

"Be careful," Robin whispered. She ducked down and crawled underneath the path of the arrow. The others followed suit and turned right to find another arrow trap, which was too low to crawl under. This one they jumped.

The final arrow trap, which they discovered upon turning left again, was too high to jump and too low to crawl under. Going one-by-one, they simply stepped past it during the break between arrows.

Another two turns and they found an odd clay symbol on the ground. Robin attempted to pick it up and examine it, but as she did, it crumbled in her hands, and the arrows stopped flying.

"Ah, so we just had to break that thing," Sanji muttered.

A final left turn led them to a dead-end with a single exhibit: *Trapped Flame* , featuring what seemed to be a live butterfly stuck into the wall with needles.

"Can we free it?" Chopper whispered.

"I think so," Robin said. "I'm not sure what else we can do here."

She carefully pulled out each needle. When she finished, the butterfly slipped down from the wall, fluttered its wings, and flew off down the path.

They followed it. As the butterfly floated down to the larger area, they found Franky, who had managed to get himself cornered and was throwing cardboard boxes at Mistake.

"What the hell did you do?" Sanji demanded.

"I could use some help here!" Franky exclaimed. "Oh, never mind—"

He pulled out another wrench from his Speedo (he seemed to have an endless supply) and threw it against the opposite wall. Mistake turned its head and tottered to the sound's source.

Meanwhile, Chopper had gone chasing the butterfly. He finally jumped up and caught it, holding it gently in his hooves.

"Maybe it can help us later," he explained.

The four left the room, shutting the door to keep Mistake trapped. They turned and examined the odd metal sculpture.

"Is this . . . a clock?" Franky asked, sounding bemused. "Because this is the weirdest clock I've ever seen."

"That's saying something," Sanji agreed.

"I wonder what these are for," Robin said, pointing. Below the clock were nine colored slots: Purple, dark blue, light blue, yellow, black, red, orange, green, and pink.

"They look like casino slots," Sanji commented. "Are we supposed to put giant chips in these or something?"

"I wouldn't doubt it, in this place," Robin agreed.

They opened the next door, but the room was completely dark. Franky took out Sanji's lighter and tried to light it up, but it seemed it was out of fuel. He stored it away again and they agreed to come back to the room later.

The group of five went straight up ahead and to the right. They came out in a small room with a medium-sized square painting of a gaping black hole hung near the ground. It didn't seem to have a title.

Luffy squatted down and stared intently at the painting.

"Um . . . what are you doing?" Usopp asked.

Luffy reached out and experimentally poked at the painting. His finger went straight through the hole and Nami shrieked.

"Ooh, mystery painting!" Luffy exclaimed. He knelt down and stuck his entire head in the hole, taking it out a moment later and facing his shocked crew. "There's a whole 'nother room in there! Hey, guys, what's wrong?"

"Don't scare us like that, you moron," Zoro snapped.

"I saw a key," Luffy said cheerfully. "I'm going in!"

"I'll hold onto your legs, Luffy- *san* ," Brook offered, kneeling down.

"Don't *encourage* him," Nami moaned.

They ignored her. Luffy crawled headfirst into the painting while Brook held his ankles tightly. A moment later Luffy came back out, clutching a small orange key in his hand.

"See, it's fine!" he exclaimed.

The others breathed sighs of relief.

"You can't blame us for worrying," Usopp pointed out. "With all the crap that's been happening . . ."

Luffy shrugged. "C'mon, let's keep going!"

He marched out the door. The others followed.

They continued up the path and turned left. About halfway down this passage was a small way to the right. A large pink flower and a large blue flower swayed oddly, lining the middle of the path, their vines curled up around their base. A plaque in front of them read *Stubborn Twins* . Behind the blue flower was an orange door.

"Oh, we can probably use the key there!" Luffy exclaimed. He marched forward, but before he got past the pink flower, a vine

whipped out and seized him around the ankle. As he fell, immobilized, more vines began wrapping themselves around his limbs, slowly pulling him into the large blossom. Petals began gradually falling off his rose.

"Shit, Luffy!" Zoro yelled. He seized his captain's arms and pulled hard, the others grabbing on to different areas to help. With a great effort they pulled Luffy free—the vines retracted and Luffy rubbed his arms.

"Thanks," he murmured, checking his rose. He had only lost around five petals and was left with a cut on his cheek.

"Alright, we'll find a way to get past those things later," Usopp said, throwing a wary glance at the innocent-looking flowers. "I guess Sanji and the others'll be coming around the corner soon. Let's wait for them."

". . . so we've gotta do something about the flowers before we leave this room," Usopp finished.

"I see," Sanji muttered.

"Chopper, what're you doing?" Nami asked, looking over. Chopper had left the group and gone to examine a painting on the wall of an unlit candle. As he did, the butterfly slipped out of his hooves and entered the painting, becoming the flame for the candle. The painting began to glow.

"Maybe this'll work for the dark room?" Chopper called.

Franky stood and carefully lifted the painting off of the wall. "Yeah, I think this would work," he agreed.

"Good job," Robin complimented him. Chopper began dancing as Sanji stood and said, "So let's go already. We can't wait around forever."

"Right," Brook agreed.

The group, with the candle painting, went back to the dark room and entered cautiously. It was practically a maze of cardboard boxes. As they entered, Zoro spotted something and picked it up.

"What's this?" he muttered, examining it. He held it out—it was a large red disk.

"Aah, so *that's* what we need," Robin said in understanding. "Okay, everyone, we need to look for eight more of those in different colors. Keep an eye out."

"Aye-aye!" Sanji exclaimed happily.

They continued through the boxes cautiously. Chopper found a light blue disk and Franky found a black one. As they moved, there was a loud *CRASH* . Sanji screamed and the others looked around; the source seemed to have been some kind of ceramic piece, fallen off its stand and shattered.

"Don't worry, it was just a vase or something," Usopp said to Sanji, soothingly stroking the cook's hair.

Sanji slapped his hand away. "Get your hands off me, jerk. I'm fine."

The group continued. Brook found a pink disk, Luffy found a green one, and Nami found a purple one.

They reached the back wall and saw the bottom of a painting titled *Malice's True Form* .

"Hey, hold up the candle," Nami said.

Franky held up the light and they examined the painting. It was a head profile, painted in dark red with an eerie black eye and mouth. The red seemed to drip out of the frame.

"Oh, geez," Zoro muttered. "Is that painted with blo—?"

"Don't say it!" Usopp and Nami shrieked.

The painting let out an eerie cackle and everyone jumped. They immediately turned away from it and went in another direction.

Robin spotted an orange disk, Sanji found a yellow one, and Usopp found a dark blue one.

"That's all of them, right?" Sanji asked.

The group left the room and went back to the clock. Each of them put the disks they had found into their respective slots. When the last disk was put in, the clock changed—a bird-like black thing seemed to extend, a leg dangling from the bottom began swinging back and forth and ticking, and the whole room went dim.

Franky set the candle painting aside as the butterfly fluttered out. "At least we can still see," he said, squinting.

"I dunno what that changed," Sanji muttered. He yawned.

"Geez, I'm . . . worn out," Zoro mumbled, blinking slowly.

"Something's wrong . . ." Robin murmured, her eyes drooping.

"Why are . . . we so tired . . . ?" Brook said softly, swaying where he stood.

"My . . ." Franky shook his head. "My brain's . . . all . . . fuzzy . . ."

Usopp struggled to keep his eyes open. "An . . . enchant . . . ment . . . ?"

Nami yawned hugely and tried to recall her words. "Fight . . . it . . ."

"We . . ." Chopper murmured, struggling to keep his head up. "Gotta . . . keep . . . going . . ."

"Yeah . . ." Luffy mumbled, sinking to his knees. "After . . . a . . ." he yawned sleepily and his eyes drooped heavily. "Little . . . rest . . ."

Zoro fell on his face; Chopper collapsed; Usopp crumpled to the ground; Nami and Robin fell against each other and sank; Franky slid down the wall; Brook's joints ceased functioning; and Luffy and his whole crew finally let sleep overcome them.

Sanji stared around at his sleeping crew—it took all his willpower to keep his eyes open. He crawled weakly to Luffy and took the key from his captain's pocket. Fighting the enchantment of the darkness, he crawled on his stomach slowly to the door.

He almost fell asleep, but managed to unlock the door (after slipping past the sleeping flowers) and crawled through. When he made it to the other side, his mind cleared and he was able to stand.

He turned back to the orange door and charged through.

Luffy opened his eyes and sat up suddenly. Around him his whole crew were waking up and looking around bemusedly.

"What happened back there?" Zoro muttered. "My mind went foggy, and then . . ."

"Some kind of spell?" Robin suggested. "It seems we all fell asleep suddenly."

"But how'd we get out?" Chopper asked confusedly.

"Yo," Sanji said. He was sitting against the wall.

"It was you?" Nami asked. "How did you not fall asleep?"

"Sheer willpower, my dear," Sanji responded smoothly. He grinned. "Though I have to admit, now *I'm* a bit tired after resisting that curse

so many times."

"Thanks, Bro Sanji," Franky said.

"We'd still be sleeping if not for you, Sanji- *san* ," Brook said cheerfully.

"No problem," Sanji said easily.

"This place is dangerous," Usopp murmured.

"Thanks, Sanji!" Luffy said cheerfully. "I know you didn't have a choice, but try not to go off on your own again, okay?"

"Why are you all—?"

"Anyway, let's keep going!" Luffy continued.

Sanji scowled.

Yakitori and the Secret Room

The Strawhats went through an orange door and came out in an aqua-colored room. It had two vases on either side of the entrance. The ones who'd lost petals in the other room placed their roses inside.

The room was very large. On the door wall, two other doors on either side led to new rooms. Two openings led away on either side of the left and right of the room, two doors were on the left and right of the far wall (with a staircase to the right of the rightmost door), and a large blank canvas hung between the far doors.

Three large sculptures sat around the large room. The one on their left was titled *Flexible Stone* and it featured a large, tan rock-like thing. The one on the right was called *Drinking in the Night* and featured a giant wine glass pouring out deep twilight liquid with stars. Finally, the third one in the middle was called *Tryst after Death* and featured a large skeleton wearing a cape and crown and holding a sword. He was caressing a girl's hair. Both were coming out of a giant picture frame.

"Nice, Brook," Sanji said approvingly, looking at Tryst. "You finally got a girlfriend."

If Brook could scowl, he would have. "Really, Sanji- *san* ! The young lady is quite pretty, but that skeleton is certainly not me! We look nothing alike!"

The others looked back and forth between Brook and the sculpture.

"Well, your hair is nicer," Franky admitted.

"It's not just the afro!" Brook exclaimed indignantly. "My cheekbones look *much* better than his!"

"They look the same to me," Luffy said, glancing back and forth.

Zoro nodded. "I see *no* difference here."

Brook fell to his knees in depression.

"What's this?" Chopper asked, pointing to something behind the vase table on their left. He ran over and picked it up—it was a square canvas, painted like a piece of a mural. Just as he showed it to the others, it vanished from his hooves.

"That's it, I want to leave," Zoro snapped, throwing his hands in the air.

"No, hold on, it reappeared over there," Nami pointed out, gesturing to the previously blank canvas across the room. The piece which had vanished was now nestled in the lower-right corner of the large canvas. The plate for the canvas was blank.

"Oh, this is like those balls of paint," Usopp said in understanding. "So we have to collect all the pieces, and then something'll happen?"

"Balls . . . of paint?" Sanji muttered, frowning.

"Don't worry about it," Chopper said quickly. "Should we split up again?"

"Sounds good," Brook agreed, getting up. "There are several rooms to explore . . . should we do groups of two and one of three?"

The others agreed. They drew straws; the teams became Luffy and Chopper, Zoro and Brook and Franky, Usopp and Sanji, and Nami and Robin. They split up and agreed to meet back in the center.

"Come on!" Luffy dragged Chopper through the closest left door.

"Okay, I'm coming!" Chopper wriggled out of Luffy's grip and looked around the room as the door shut behind them. "Whoa, what happened here!?"

The room was in chaos. Squeaking black things ran all around and charcoal scribbles covered the walls and floor. An open sketchbook lay in the corner. A few paintings hung crooked on the wall, their nameplates either scribbled over or torn off.

"The heck is happening?" Luffy said confusedly.

Chopper looked around and spotted a plaque by the door. "'A notice to all visitors: This room has been invaded by stickmen. A reward will be given to anyone who can catch the perpetrators and return them to where they came from.'"

"So we gotta catch the stickmen?" Luffy asked, his eyes darting around the room as the black things raced around. "Sounds like fun!"

He dove and pinned a stickman to the ground. It went limp and Luffy was easily able to carry it.

"Cool!" he exclaimed, holding up the limp figure. "Let's do this, Chopper!"

It took them nearly ten minutes to catch all of the stickmen. One of them had been riding a small, colorful bird, which rested on the ground, exhausted from the running it'd been forced to do.

"Phew," Luffy gasped, tired from all the running he'd done. "I think that's all of them . . ."

Chopper sat down heavily. "Ugh . . . my lungs are gonna burst . . . I hate being weak . . ."

Luffy nodded and crawled over to the sketchbook. "I bet this is where they came from."

He dumped the stickmen onto the book, where they melted back into the pages. Chopper did the same with the ones he'd caught. A moment later, two painting pieces appeared next to the book.

They cheered, picked them up, and let them vanish.

"Alright, let's go," Luffy said, suddenly full of energy again. He and Chopper left the room and were about to go to the center when they heard a chirping behind them.

The tiny bird had followed them. It looked up at them and chirped.

"Hey, it likes us!" Luffy exclaimed. "Let's name him . . . Yakitori!"

The bird chirped in alarm.

Chopper glared at Luffy. "Don't name him *that* ! Anyway, he says he's looking for his home."

The bird chirped and waddled away. Luffy and Chopper followed close behind.

It led them to the hallway on the right, which turned out to be a long passageway. It glanced back at them, positioned itself at the center of the walls, and began walking in an odd pattern.

It walked on down the hallway and waited for them at the end.

"Well, let's go!" Luffy exclaimed.

"Wait!" Chopper exclaimed. "The bird was walking funny . . . and he just said, 'Follow my steps!'"

Luffy frowned. "Oh . . . so we gotta walk like the bird?"

He and Chopper went to the spot where the bird had started. Following Chopper's lead, they went in the same odd pattern as the bird had.

"We probably would've been killed if we hadn't done that," Chopper whispered.

Luffy grinned. "Good thing we're alive! Hey, Yakitori, thanks!"

The bird chirped indignantly, turned, and hopped into a painting hanging on the wall titled *Cozy Home* . Another painting piece appeared next to it.

"Let's go back to the others," Luffy said cheerfully as Chopper picked up the piece.

"Okay . . . so what's with this room?" Franky asked. He, Brook, and Zoro were standing in a room full of small cacti. Two painting pieces lay at the other end of the room.

"So we just gotta get past the cacti?" Zoro muttered. "Seems easy enough."

He went across the room, doing odd twirls and tip-toes to avoid the small plants. Soon he reached the other side, picked up the pieces, and twirled back across.

"Have you considered a career as a ballerina, Zoro- *san* ?" Brook asked seriously as the three left the room.

Zoro scowled.

"No one went in there, right?" Franky said, pointing to the hall on the left.

The three entered the hallway and came out in a room covered floor-to-ceiling with identical paintings of a Cyclops woman.

"Oh, my, I'm seeing double, triple . . ." Brook chuckled. "And more! Though of course, I have no eyes to see with!"

Zoro tapped the plaque by the door. "It wants us to find the living one," he said.

"How are we supposed to tell?" Franky demanded, looking around at the paintings.

Zoro shrugged. "Maybe one'll get up and walk away."

"Don't say that!" Brook shrieked.

The three examined the paintings closely, their eyes darting between them.

"Hey!" Franky exclaimed suddenly. He pointed to one near the top. "That one blinked!"

"What, seriously?" Zoro demanded.

As Franky pointed to the painting, its eye focused on him. The Cyclops smile grew wider and a painting piece fell from the ceiling. Franky picked it up and it vanished.

"These things give me the creeps," Zoro muttered. "Let's get outta here."

"Aah, we picked the safe room," Usopp said in relief. He and Sanji had entered a room full of nothing but bookshelves and a small easel in one corner.

Sanji yawned. "Usopp . . . do you mind if I take a rest?"

"Huh?"

Sanji grinned. "You all got some sleep back there, even if it *was* from a spell, but I wasn't kidding when I said resisting it wore me out. Besides, we've been walking for quite a while."

"Yeah, go ahead and rest," Usopp said. "I won't leave the room."

Sanji nodded, stalked over to the far wall, and slid down, one leg stretched out and one leg brought up against his chest. He yawned. "Just let me know . . . if you find something."

Usopp nodded and began examining the bookshelf. He found a painting piece stuck in one of the books and pulled it out.

A few minutes later, the bookshelves began to rattle and the lights flickered. A book fell off the shelf. Usopp shrieked and turned to Sanji, only to find that the blond man had fallen asleep.

"Oh, god, wake up!" Usopp cried. Sanji did not stir.

A moment later the room stopped rattling. Usopp breathed a sigh of relief and went to pick up the book that had fallen off of the bookshelf. He was about to put it back when the title caught his eye.

The Secret Room

Curiosity piqued, he flicked through the pages.

"To exit the secret room, flick the red switch . . . but how do I enter?" he muttered. He went back a few pages and examined the first ones.

"To enter . . . first read the writing on the back of the long bookshelf," he muttered, reading from the book.

He put the book back, stole another glance at Sanji (still napping), and went around to the longest bookshelf, peering into the crack between it and the wall.

"Read the writing on the canvas," he mumbled to himself. He turned around and found that the previously blank easel had writing on it.

"Pull . . . the cord?" he said. He turned around and saw a long cord hanging from the ceiling in the middle of the room.

With one last glance at Sanji, he approached the cord and pulled it down.

The room suddenly changed. Usopp screamed. He was now in a tiny square room. Four switches were on one wall—red, yellow, green,

and blue. On the opposite wall hung a mural of various animals and plants. The plaque below it read - *Crows and Five* - .

"Can I put something in here?" Usopp muttered to himself. "And how do I get back to Sanji?"

He looked up at the painting. "Hmm . . . so I guess I have to put in a number here and a noun here . . ."

He counted the number of crows and input it into the keypad. It appeared on the plaque. The second part took him a bit longer, but he eventually found five fish and entered the word in. There was a sound behind him and he turned to see a painting piece on the ground. He picked it up and it vanished.

"Crap, how do I get out of here?"

Usopp looked at the switches on the wall. Hadn't the book said something about a red switch?

He cautiously pulled the red switch and without warning his surroundings changed again. He was back in the center of the room with the books, and Sanji was up and about, searching the room. He whipped around and breathed a sigh of relief when he saw Usopp.

"Geez, Usopp, where the hell were you?" he demanded, going over to him. "I'm sorry I fell asleep, I know that was careless, but that's no reason to leave! Nami- *swan* said we weren't supposed to go off on our own!"

"I-I'm sorry!" Usopp exclaimed. "I went to a secret room—but never mind that, I'm sorry for leaving you alone! I didn't mean to!"

Sanji narrowed his eyes.

"What?"

"Usopp," he said seriously, "what's going on?"

"What d'you mean?"

"You're all acting weirdly," Sanji said, folding his arms. "For some reason I need to be protected more than anyone else all of a sudden. Just now, you didn't say, 'Sorry for going off on my own,' you said, 'Sorry for leaving you alone.' Why can't I be left alone?"

Usopp looked away.

"Don't look away."

Sanji sighed. "Usopp . . . I know a chunk of my memory's missing. Tell me what happened during that time. Tell me why you all suddenly think I'm fragile."

Usopp bit his lip. "Well . . ."

" *Tell me* ."

Sanji sat silently on the floor. He would have taken out a cigarette if he still had a working lighter. His lips were pressed tightly together.

"You don't remember, do you?" Usopp asked quietly.

Sanji ran his fingers through his hair. "Bits and pieces. I remember I was acting . . . well, not like myself for a while . . . I think I was talking to Chopper, and then he hugged me . . . I was rude to Robin- *chwan* . . . and . . ." he frowned. "Did I tell Nami- *swan* . . . something rude?"

Usopp nodded slowly. Sanji exhaled and looked up.

"It's okay," Usopp said quickly. "You weren't yourself, and no one blames you. You don't have to remember everything right now—if you talk to Chopper about it, he'll probably have some advice—"

"I must apologize IMMEDIATELY!" Sanji yelled, standing up suddenly. He ran out of the room with a cry of, "Nami- *swan* ! Robin- *chwan* ! Forgive me, my loves!"

Usopp stared after him incredulously.

"Nothing fazes him," he muttered, grinning and running after Sanji.

"Oh, come on, this thing's locked," Nami muttered, tugging at the door handle fruitlessly.

Robin smiled and headed up the staircase. "Are you coming?"

Nami sighed and followed her up the steps. At the top, they came upon a huge hole in the ground. The plaque on its side read *Wonders through the Telescope's Eye* .

" *This* is a Guertena piece?" Nami said in surprise. "A huge hole in the ground?"

Robin turned around and spotted another copy of the Mistake painting behind them.

"Be careful," she said softly, pointing to it.

Just as Nami turned around curiously, the painting jumped out of its frame and pushed them down the hole.

They fell down, down, down, past many brightly-colored orbs and yellow wall, until they hit the ground hard. They each lost a few petals.

"Ow-ow-ow . . ." Nami muttered, sitting up slowly. "Robin, are you okay?"

"I-I'm fine," Robin murmured, shaking her head to clear it. "Goodness, that was startling."

"That's one way of putting it," Nami muttered.

There was a loud *THUMP* and Mistake came falling down. It got up and began wandering around the small room.

"Be careful," Robin said softly.

Nami nodded and looked around the room. In the center was an opaque crystal box, which opened and shut briefly, showing rows upon rows of shiny pearl teeth.

"Hey," it hissed. "Want me treasure?"

"Treasure!?" Nami exclaimed. Mistake turned its unseeing head to her and she quickly lowered her voice. "Sure, I want your treasure."

"Solve me puzzle, then," the box whispered. "Mess up and me bite."

It gnashed its teeth.

"What's the puzzle?" Robin whispered.

"Which one wasn't there?" the box asked. "The greenie, the yellowy, or the orangey?"

Robin frowned. "It's referring to the orbs we saw when falling down."

"I'll go up there and fall again," Nami offered. "But catch me, okay!?"

Robin smiled. "Of course."

Nami left the room, unlocking the door. It turned out they were in the room they'd been unable to get into earlier. A minute later she came falling down and Robin caught her. This time they each lost only one petal.

"T-Thanks," Nami said. She got out of Robin's arms and dusted herself off. "The green one's missing, Mr. Box."

The box was silent for a moment.

". . . You smart," it said at last. "Okay, have me treasure."

It opened up wide and revealed a painting piece.

"Well, better than nothing," Nami said disappointedly. She took the piece and she and Robin left the room, shutting the door behind them to trap Mistake inside.

We have one or two more chapters to go!

To the Real World!

"So," Sanji said once the Strawhats were reunited. "I lose my mind for a few minutes and you all decide not to tell me?"

Everyone stared at him.

"You remembered?" Franky asked at last.

Sanji shook his head. "Bits and pieces. Most of it's a blank."

Everyone looked at Usopp, who raised his hands defensively. " *You* try saying no to him, see what he does!"

"We—we were trying to protect you," Chopper admitted. "We didn't pay enough attention to you before—and that's why things got so bad—" tears welled up in his eyes.

Sanji's gaze softened as he looked down at the reindeer. "It's really my fault, isn't it?" he reasoned. "Sounds like a bunch of stuff happened and I just let it get to me."

He frowned. "But god *damn* it, you guys—not you, Nami- *swan* , Robin- *chwan* —if you don't tell me what happened, how am I supposed to keep myself in check?"

The others looked away.

"Anyway," Sanji said, taking out a cigarette only to put it away once he'd remembered he didn't have a light, "I'll make sure it doesn't happen again, so you can all stop treating me like I'm made of glass."

"Sorry," Usopp mumbled.

The others nodded, slightly shamefaced.

"Good," Sanji muttered. "And incidentally . . . Nami- *swan* , Robin- *chwan* , I'm so sorry for my earlier rudeness!"

Nami rolled her eyes. "You weren't yourself. Don't worry about it."

Robin shrugged. "It's perfectly fine."

Sanji looked immensely relieved.

"Well, now that that's settled . . ." Zoro glanced over at the large canvas. "It looks like we got all of them."

The others looked at the canvas and the group approached it. The pieces, all put together, created a clear image of an oil painting. The view was from the back and showed a man's left hand resting on a canvas, the pointer finger extended and painting a green streak down a faint sketch. The man's head was not shown, cut off by the top of the frame. His hand displayed lines of age; he must have been at least fifty years old.

The blank plate now held a single name:

Guertena

Robin read the title aloud. As she did so, the painting shook slightly and the pieces melted together to become a single canvas. A door faded into existence next to the canvas.

"This must have been Guertena- *san* near the time of his death," Brook mused aloud. "That image he's painting—it looks like *Mary* ."

"So it is," Robin said in surprise.

"It's odd, though," Brook remarked. "Guertena lived at a time when self-portraits were all the rage of artists—every painter, photographer, and sculptor was creating self-images. But one of the reasons Guertena was so well-known in his time was because he refused to create a self-portrait, no matter how many requests he got."

"Weird that he'd make one and hide it away," Zoro remarked. "You guys said *Mary* was his last known work, but he's painting it in this, so . . ." His voice trailed off.

"I wonder," Robin said softly, but was unheard, as Franky said loudly, "Guys, c'mon, it isn't SUPER to dawdle! Let's get through this door!"

Everyone agreed and went through the door. They came upon a dimly-lit narrow staircase and shuffled up it single-file.

They came out into a dark area. The walls were black. A passage went to their right and a larger one went straight up ahead. To their left was a large sculpture of a red rose, titled *Embodiment of Spirit* . To their right up ahead was a painting of a man called *The Coughing Man* .

"This looks familiar," Robin whispered.

Nami nodded, looking around in a daze. "Did we do it . . . ?"

"We're back!" Chopper cried, running ahead. He looked at the rose sculpture, stared at the painting of Coughing Man, looked up ahead at the huge floor painting *Abyss of the Deep* . "We did it!"

Everyone cheered. Luffy and Usopp hugged each other. Franky whooped and struck his signature pose. Zoro and Sanji let out sighs of relief.

But soon their cheering died down.

"It . . . it *looks* the same," Robin said cautiously. "But the walls are darker . . . and there's no one around."

"We must've been down there for hours," Brook reasoned. "Isn't it possible that everyone's gone home and the gallery's locked up?"

"I don't think so," Nami whispered. "This feels like it did when Usopp and I found ourselves alone."

Zoro nodded. "Luffy and me too."

"But . . ." Chopper's eyes filled with tears again. "But we're back here! We must be close! Can't we look around? Maybe there's something we're missing!"

"We were all looking at exhibits when we were trapped in this evil place," Robin commented. "Could we retrace our steps?"

The others murmured assent—not that they had any other plans.

"Okay," Robin said. "Chopper and I were viewing this one—*Embodiment of Spirit* ."

"Come to think of it . . ." Sanji pulled out his rose and studied it. "These roses . . . this sculpture . . . are they connected?"

Robin raised her eyebrows. "This *is* the world of Guertena . . . and that would explain it. *Beautiful at a glance, but if you get too close, it will induce pain* ."

Chopper nodded. "Like the thorns on these . . . and if we're not careful, the petals fall off!"

"Enough of the soul-searching," Zoro snapped. "Sorry, but I'm sick and tired of this shit, and we need to look for another staircase or *something* ."

"Right," Robin agreed. "Sorry. There's nothing else here, so let's move ahead."

"Usopp and I were down this way," Nami said, pointing to their right.

They went to *Twinkling of Crystals and Stars* but found neither staircase nor door.

"I think the rest of us were upstairs?" Sanji asked. "I was by myself. There was some portrait called *The Hanged Man* ."

They went around the corner and headed out, glancing around cautiously at the paintings. They passed *The Lady in Red* , but she made no move to attack.

They found the staircase and went up after hopefully trying the front door. The window was still fogged up, and they found nothing by Hanged.

"Franky- *san* and I were over here," Brook recalled. They went down the passage, glancing nervously at the headless statues down the other way.

There was nothing near *Wariness* .

"If there isn't anything around ours, I vote we break everything and see if that does something," Zoro suggested. "Luffy and I were by some big mural—what was it? Something World."

They went around the corner and quickly found the large mural.

"It changed," Luffy said in surprise. "Remember, Zoro? It was all dark and weird before."

Zoro squinted. "You're right," he murmured. "It looks like . . . like the *real* gallery."

" *Fabricated World* ," Nami read aloud from the plaque. "'Once you jump in, all your time will be lost. Will you still continue?'"

As she finished reading, the lights suddenly flickered. Everyone jumped and looked around, on guard. There was a sudden white flash—when their eyes recovered, they saw that the frame had vanished from the canvas.

"Once you jump in," Chopper repeated. "Does that mean . . . ?"

Luffy slowly backed up from the painting.

"What's wrong?" Franky demanded, glancing over. "Strawhat, don't tell me you're sca—?"

Luffy took a running leap and vanished inside the canvas. The others let out cries of shock and scrambled around each other to look inside.

Luffy was standing there. He stood, looked around, jumped up and down, and cheered. He turned and grinned widely.

"Guys!" he exclaimed, his voice oddly muffled. "I really did it! I'm back!"

They cheered. Zoro was next to go, Luffy giving him a hand through. Usopp nervously clambered through with Brook and Chopper in tow. Franky leapt through with a loud *SUPER* . Robin climbed through with a graceful leap.

Finally it was just Nami and Sanji.

"Ladies first," Sanji said with a broad grin.

He took Nami's hand, intending to help her through. They were just climbing up when—

"Hey, you damn squirt!"

They whipped around, Sanji's leg slipping from the frame. His eyes widened and his lips popped apart.

A man was standing in front of him, just down the hall. He wore a ridiculously tall chef's hat, a white apron, and his mustache was insanely long and braided stiffly. His right leg was gone below the knee, replaced with a classic peg.

"Owner . . . Zeff?" Sanji said blankly, staring at the old man in shock.

Zeff rolled his eyes. "Who d'you *think* I am, your fairy godmother!? Listen, eggplant, everyone's waiting just around the corner. C'mon,

now, hustle!"

Sanji stared at him in shock.

"Right," said another voice—a female one. A tall woman stepped out of the shadows. Her head was shaved in a Mohawk style, the middle section tied back in a ponytail. She wore a plaid shirt and smoked a cigarette. She crossed her arms and stared expectantly at Nami.

"Bellemère," Nami whispered disbelievingly.

Bellemère grinned. "Hey, Nami! Listen, I need your help—Nojiko and I can't handle the tangerines by ourselves! We've got way too many this year! I'll make duck with orange sauce tonight—it'll taste great, I promise!"

The two stared at their loved ones in shock.

"Hey, what're you guys staring at?" Luffy demanded. "C'mon!"

"It's not scary, cook, I *promise* ," Zoro said sarcastically. "Get your ass over here."

"No," Nami said suddenly. "No, it's a trick—you're not Bellemère."

The figure of her mother frowned. "Nami, come on, I need help with the—"

"You're just a painting," Nami said. "You're not real!"

She quickly turned to the canvas. "Sanji- *kun* , let's go."

Sanji ignored her.

"If I go . . . with him . . ." he murmured as if in a trance, taking a step towards the figure of Zeff, who grinned encouragingly.

"Sanji- *kun* ," Nami snapped. She seized him by the shoulders and turned him around. " *Look at me* ."

Sanji stared at her, narrowed his eyes slightly, and shook his head vigorously. "Sorry, Nami- *swan* ," he said. "Thank you."

He held out his hand and smiled. "Shall we go?"

The figures of their loved ones rushed forward as if to tackle them, but it was too late—they were through.

Brook and Franky jumped a bit as they studied *Wariness* .

"Huh . . . ?"

"I . . ."

Robin and Chopper, standing in front of *Embodiment of Spirit* , suddenly looked at each other confusedly.

"Kind of . . ."

"Feel . . ."

Sanji put his finger to his chin in thought, distracted from *The Hanged Man* .

"Like . . ."

Usopp and Nami looked up from *Twinkling of Crystals and Stars* and stared at each other.

"I'm . . ."

"Forgetting . . ."

Zoro and Luffy seemed to be in deep thought as they stood in front of *Fabricated World* .

"Something . . ."

"Important . . ."

Alriiiight, one more chapter!

A Peaceful Departure

The Strawhats met up with Robin and Chopper at *Embodiment of Spirit* , since those two were closest to the door.

"Hey," Luffy said distractedly. "So . . . should we go?"

The others murmured assent, looking around as if to check that everyone was there.

"You guys, too . . ." Nami said. "Do you all feel like . . . we're forgetting something?"

"Yeah!" Chopper exclaimed. "I—I just had this weird feeling—and Robin too—"

"We *all* did?" Brook asked. "Ah, so it wasn't just Franky's and my age . . ."

"Watch who you're callin' old, skeleton," Franky muttered, jabbing him in the ribs.

Zoro glanced over at the rose sculpture. "What's this . . . ?"

Robin looked over and explained the piece to him, albeit distractedly.

"It feels like . . ." Zoro glanced down at his haramaki. "I thought something would be there . . ."

Luffy and Usopp glanced down at their pockets. Chopper felt around the brim of his hat. Brook checked his ascot, Franky and Sanji glanced down at their shirt pockets, and Robin and Nami checked behind their ears.

"It's not just me?" Zoro said.

The others shook their heads and shrugged.

"Speaking of missing things, though," Usopp said, pointing to Zoro's arm. "Where's your bandana?"

Zoro checked his arm and frowned. "What? That's—that's weird, I had it when we came in—no way someone could have stolen it without me noticing."

Luffy nodded. "I was with you, so I would've seen it . . . and you definitely had it on earlier . . ."

Nami suddenly frowned. "There's something in my shirt."

The others stared at her.

"I can help you look," Sanji said, reaching a lecherous hand towards her chest, but she slapped him away and reached unabashedly inside the neck. She pulled out a piece of black cloth—Zoro's bandana.

"When did this . . . ?" she murmured, holding it up and examining it. "This is . . . covered in blood . . ."

"You witch!" Zoro exclaimed. "What's the big idea, snatching that when I'm not looking!?"

"No," Nami said slowly. "You . . . gave this . . . to me . . ."

"Excuse me?"

Nami held the bandana and slowly approached Sanji, proceeding to rub the cloth up and down the cook's arm like she was mopping something up. "Sanji- *kun* ," she murmured. "You . . . were hurt . . . covered in blood . . ."

Sanji checked himself over. "Nami- *swan* ?"

"Luffy . . . and Zoro . . . went to get your . . . your rose," Nami said, wonder dawning on her face. "And . . . Usopp and I . . . stayed

behind and took care of you . . . your rose was healed, and the wounds closed . . ."

Usopp frowned. "What are you talking about?"

"Oh, god," Nami said shakily. "The headless statues—the creepy dolls—our roses—" tears filled her eyes and she suddenly hugged Usopp. "We did it! We actually made it back!"

Usopp was too surprised and confused to stop her. She let go after a moment and stared around at the crew, her happy smile fading.

"Guys?" she said. "We did it!" suddenly her smile disappeared entirely. "Don't you remember . . . ?"

Everyone shook their heads.

"The Lady in Red and Blue," she said. "We had to run from them—Sanji- *kun* , you let your rose get taken, and you got hurt—Usopp, there was that spitting painting!"

Usopp slowly backed away from her. "Call the Navy, quick," he whispered.

"No— *listen* !" Nami exclaimed, frustrated. "Why don't you guys remember? It definitely happened!"

Everyone stared at her. Nami stared around at them incredulously before snapping her fingers.

"Usopp—I lent you my handkerchief!"

"What?"

"Check your pockets!"

Usopp frowned and felt around, his expression changing to confusion when he pulled out Nami's handkerchief.

"This is soaked in blood," he murmured. "What happened . . . ?"

"You were wounded," Nami prompted. "On your—"

"—My finger?" Usopp said aloud, holding up his index finger. "On the . . . the fishing hook . . ."

His eyes widened. "We were . . . in that purple room. Sanji . . . and Chopper . . . went somewhere else, and you and me . . . the poisonous gas, and the juggling guy, and Sanji going crazy!"

"Excuse me?" Sanji asked irritably.

Usopp laughed aloud and grabbed Nami's hands. "We're alive! We don't need to depend on flowers! Oh my god, this is great!"

When it became clear that the rest of them still thought those two to be hallucinating, Usopp turned to Robin. "Robin, I lent you my Tabasco sauce!"

Robin found the sauce on her person and frowned. "Why . . . ?"

"For writing," Usopp said. "You were making notes—"

"On . . . the paintings," Robin murmured in surprise, furrowing her brow. "Chopper and I . . . the pink and purple roses . . ." Comprehension dawned on her face. "Oh, my goodness . . ." she smiled broadly. "We're back in the real world!"

"Why are you three remembering some crazy fever dream and not us?" Franky demanded.

"I think . . ." Nami said slowly, "it looks like . . . we need something given to us from someone. Our roses are gone, and I don't think anything else from *that world* stayed."

"Luffy, I lent you a dictionary," Robin remembered. "It's in your pocket."

Luffy checked his pockets and found the tiny dictionary. "Fish . . ." he said slowly.

"Now's not the time, I'll make something when we head back to the Sunny," Sanji muttered.

"No," Luffy said. "Fishman— *Fisherman* . . . he helped us . . . he gave us . . ." he grinned. "The red umbrella . . . for the rainy room . . . and then Sanji went crazy!"

"Seriously, *what* ?" Sanji snapped.

Luffy laughed out loud, attracting annoyed glances from the other patrons. "Whoopee! Guys, we're out!" he pinched his cheeks. "And I'm rubber again!"

Zoro frowned. "Since when were you not?"

Robin tested out her devil fruit powers and found that they were finally working again.

"We're strong again," Luffy said happily. "Hey, Chopper—I gave you candy!"

"You did?" Chopper asked, his eyes sparkling. "When?"

"Back in that room," Luffy said, grinning. "Nami was resting after she'd been attacked—"

"Nami- *swan* was attacked?" Sanji exclaimed.

"—and Sanji was all depressed and I gave you candy," Luffy said, ignoring Sanji. "It's in your hat!"

Chopper checked underneath his pink top hat and found the tiny wrapped sweet. He stared at it.

"You said—you didn't like this," he said, staring at it. "And . . . Sanji got mad . . . at you! And then—we found Brook—and Franky! And

then later—we were separated, and Sanji went crazy!"

"I swear to god—"

"We're back," Chopper cried, leaping up and hugging Luffy while crying. "We don't need roses anymore! And we're strong again! And the paintings aren't coming to life!"

After a moment, he turned to Sanji. "I gave you medicine," he said. "For your headache! After you went back to normal!"

Sanji frowned and checked his pockets. When he came upon the little bottle, he stared at it and frowned.

"I . . . I didn't remember . . . how I got there . . . or what everyone was doing," he said slowly. "My head was pounding . . . Chopper, you gave this . . . to me . . ."

He sighed and grinned. "We really did it . . . we came back! Nami-*swan* , Robin- *chwan* , we're alive!"

Sanji remembered the empty lighter he'd loaned Franky, who discovered it and soon remembered the events of the dark gallery with a cheer and a *SUPER* . He then reminded Brook that he'd let him borrow a wrench; Brook discovered it and eventually recalled what had happened.

Finally only Zoro was left.

"Zoro- *san* ," Brook said, "I gave you a tea bag, to help you relax when you were upset. Although . . ." he chuckled. "We found no water to use it with . . ."

Zoro felt around inside his *haramaki* , frowned, and pulled out the small bag. He studied it silently for a whole minute.

"Do you remember?" Nami asked.

Zoro scowled. "Remember what? I dunno where or how I got this, or what kind of joke you guys are playing. Cut it out already."

The others looked surprised and disappointed.

"But—the headless statues?" Luffy prompted. "Our roses? The paintings?"

Zoro stared at him. "What are you talking about?"

Luffy stared at Zoro in disbelief.

"Hey, Zoro?" Usopp said. "Rule number one of telling a lie: Keep a straight face."

Zoro stared at Usopp for a moment before grinning. "You got me."

Nami punched Zoro in the head. "Don't DO that!"

Zoro rubbed his head and scowled.

The crew spent a good moment smiling around at everyone, relieved that they were all alive and back in the real world. But the questions soon came.

"So what happened, guys?" Luffy demanded, turning to Nami and Sanji. "When we were going through Fabulous World—"

"Fabricated—" Zoro muttered.

"—through Fabulous World, you guys took a long time."

Sanji shrugged. "Don't worry about it. We got a bit distracted by an illusion, that's all." He smiled gratefully at Nami.

"And you still don't remember what happened?" Chopper asked Sanji concernedly.

Sanji sighed. "I wish I did, but my memories are still in pieces from that time. Speaking of which—" he handed Chopper back the bottle of medicine. "I feel fine now."

Chopper took back the bottle.

"Oh, that reminds me," Robin murmured. She took out her notebook, handing the Tabasco back to Usopp as she did so. Flicking through the pages, she let out a noise of surprise.

"Odd," she commented, displaying the blank pages to the crew. "The notes and sketches I made are gone."

"Mystery notes," Luffy said wisely, handing the dictionary back to Robin.

Robin smiled. "Perhaps so."

"Come to think of it, where did our roses go?" Usopp asked, handing Nami's handkerchief back to her, only to have it shoved at him with the reminder that he needed to wash it first.

"We don't need them anymore," Zoro said, handing the teabag back to Brook, saying that he'd have some later. "So I guess they vanished with that world."

"Our clothes are fine," Nami commented, gesturing to her and Sanji's clothes as she handed Zoro's bandana back. "They were covered in blood earlier."

Sanji nodded. "Well, this way we don't have to put in the effort of cleaning them," he joked. "By the way, Franky, keep the lighter. It's empty anyway, and I don't want it back after where it's been."

Franky grinned as Brook handed him his wrench. "Sure, Bro Sanji."

"This whole thing is really strange, though," Usopp muttered. "Like, shouldn't the sun be setting? We were stuck in that place for *hours* ."

Nami took out a pocket-watch and flicked it open. "Oh," she exclaimed, showing them. "Look at this!"

Sanji's eyes widened. "We've only been here for . . . half an hour?"

" *All your time will be lost* ," Robin quoted. "No time passed while we were stuck in that gallery. I'll bet anything that clock stopped ticking in there."

Nami snapped it shut. "So, it seems like looking at Fabricated World triggered the entrance into the—the dark gallery . . ."

Luffy and Zoro quickly held up their hands defensively.

"Don't worry about it, you two couldn't possibly have known," Nami said, waving a hand. "But I wouldn't put it past you two to look even if you knew. Anyway, if that was the case, why didn't only Luffy and Zoro get stuck there?"

The others looked pensive.

"Maybe . . . it brings whoever was looking at the painting, and whoever has a strong connection with the viewer," Robin murmured. "That seems a bit farfetched, though."

"It makes more sense than anything else, really," Franky said with a shrug. "But then, if looking at Fabulous World is all that's needed to trigger it, why don't more people end up there?"

"We all lost our memories of that place," Brook reminded him. "And no time passed while we were there. Isn't it possible that many more people become stuck there, but not all of them remember the events?"

Sanji nodded. "Makes sense. But . . . what would happen if you got stuck there for good? Say you lost all your rose petals or you just got lost." He glanced at Zoro. "Wouldn't people notice you're missing?"

"People noticed Guertena was missing," Robin whispered. "But . . . he left behind so many pieces of his soul; it would be hard to forget him."

The others stared at her.

"Come again?" Zoro said flatly.

"Say that one of us was trapped in the gallery," Robin murmured, her hands shaking slightly. "Sanji, for example."

Sanji raised an eyebrow. "Like . . . if I had lost all my petals, or if I hadn't gone through Fabulous World?"

Robin nodded. "Surely we would notice you were missing."

"Of course!" Luffy said immediately.

"What if we didn't?"

"Why wouldn't we?" Franky demanded.

"We wouldn't forget Sanji!" Chopper cried.

Robin bit her lip. "We all lost our memories initially. If we hadn't all given and received items, we would have never recovered those memories."

"What are you getting at?" Zoro demanded.

"If Sanji were to become trapped—or die—in that gallery, wouldn't he forever be *a part* of that gallery?" Robin said softly, looking around at them.

"I guess I would?" Sanji muttered. "I mean . . . if you say that by being here, I'm a part of this world, then I'd become a part of *that* world by being trapped there."

Robin nodded. "And since we lost all memories connected to that world . . . we would lose our memories of Sanji."

The others instantly became somber at this revelation. Sanji's eyes widened and he seemed at a loss for words.

"So . . ." Luffy's voice was close to breaking. "We'd . . . forget Sanji?"

Robin nodded.

"But what would happen to me?" Sanji whispered.

Robin thought for a moment. "Isn't . . . everything in that world an art piece? A painting, a sculpture, a statue . . ."

"No way," Sanji said with a shaky laugh. "Robin- *chwan* , you can't seriously be saying . . ."

"And what about a cook?" Luffy demanded. "What the hell would we do without our cook?"

"Sanji, don't ever leave us!" Usopp wailed, clinging onto Sanji's arm desperately.

"Don't leave!" Chopper cried, grabbing onto his other arm.

"I don't wanna forget you, Bro Sanji!" Franky cried, grabbing Sanji from behind.

Sanji shook them off. "You guys know I'm not going anywhere? This is all 'what-if.'"

"Er . . ." Brook turned to Robin. "What was that you said about Guertena- *san* , Robin- *san* ?"

Robin frowned. "This is really all speculation, but . . . Guertena's body was never found. We found a self-portrait which shouldn't have existed. It may seem farfetched, but when you consider all we've seen . . ."

"He got trapped in his own world?" Nami whispered.

Robin nodded, briefly closing her eyes. "But . . . he was not forgotten, because he left behind so many pieces of his soul. His artwork lives on in his place."

Everyone was rather somber at this.

"Whether he meant to create that world or not," Brook said, sweeping off his hat, "he only wanted to show others his 'heart.'"

Usopp nodded slowly. "I mean . . . some of the art helped us. The Fisherman guy helped you five, we bribed the creepy blue face and those lips . . . the guy in the brown shirt in THE LIARS' ROOM . . ."

"And the paintings *look* nice, too," Luffy said solemnly.

Nami smiled. "I have an idea . . ."

"Yes, right this way . . ."

"Is this one okay?"

"Oh, it's him!"

"Yeah, this one!"

"What? I prefer this one."

"That's too big!"

"And it would break easily."

"Mister, how much for this one?"

"That one's . . ."

"How about . . ."

"That's too low! What about . . ."

"You win."

"Great! How long will it take . . . ?"

The Strawhats set sail a few days later with a new memory hanging on the kitchen wall. Luffy grinned at it as they ate dinner.

"Yakitori and his friend look good there," he said happily.

Nami had purchased *Cozy Home* from the storeroom of the gallery a few days prior. It fit well above the couch and brought a sense of warmth to the dining area.

"Luffy, don't call him that," Chopper muttered.

"So his name's Yakitori," Zoro murmured thoughtfully.

"Not you, too!" Chopper exclaimed. "He said his name's—"

"Yakitori sounds good right now, actually," Sanji commented.

Chopper frowned at them.

Robin smiled. "They do look comfortable."

"Soup's on," Sanji said, serving up dinner. "Hope you all like it!"

And so, with no possessed artwork around to hurt them or roses to depend on, the Strawhats went about their normal lives on the Sunny.

~Fin~

Story's done! Thank you for all your support, everyone~!

We have a sequel now! /s/11262517/1/Return-to-the-Gallery